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*SOCIAL QUESTIONS OF TO-DAY*  
EDITED BY H. DE B. GIBBINS, M.A.

## A SHORTER WORKING DAY

# SOCIAL QUESTIONS OF TO-DAY.

*Edited by H. de B. GIBBINS, M.A.*

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# A SHORTER WORKING DAY

BY

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OF HADFIELD'S STEEL FOUNDRY COMPANY, SHEFFIELD

AND

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AUTHOR OF

"THE INDUSTRIAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND"

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRIZEMAN IN POLITICAL ECONOMY

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THE WIND  
IN THE WILLOWS

1.20.14  
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## PREFACE.

THIS little volume is a combination of the work of two writers, the one a student of economic science, and the other a practical man of business. It does not directly advocate a shorter working day from the point of view of eager partisans of the present Eight Hours Movement, but at the same time both authors have been compelled to come to the conclusion that a reduction of the present working hours would be by no means an economic impossibility. The reader will easily see that the chapters have been written in some cases by independent hands, the student discussing the economic and historical aspects, and the man of business giving his actual experience of what he has done himself and found other business men doing. These chapters are distinguished by the initials of the writer who is in each case responsible for them ; and where the work of both is combined, the initials of both are given.

A special feature of the treatment of the subject here presented is the chapter on, and constant reference to, the experience of our Australian colonies in regard to the working of the Eight Hours Day, and the writer of this part of the book desires to express his indebtedness to Dr. Stephen Bauer's valuable *brochure on Arbeiterfragen und*

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*Lohnpolitik in Australasien* (Jena, 1891), which gives as an appendix a valuable conspectus of past and present wages in Australia.

Perhaps it may be well to remark that our *Shorter Working Day* is written on lines quite different from Messrs. Webb and Cox's *Eight Hours Day*, and in no sense competes with that extremely able and valuable work, which both of us greatly admire. If anything, it is rather a supplement to it, as it brings down the history of the movement to September, 1892, and includes reference to recent developments of an important character which have only occurred since the *Eight Hours Day* was published. In more than one point we must be indebted to Messrs. Cox and Webb's book, and hereby gratefully express our obligations.

It remains to remark that part of Chapter IV. was first published (anonymously) by H. de B. Gibbins in the *Westminster Review* of July, 1889, and that R. A. Hadfield's part of the book—especially Chapters VI. and VII.—is partly taken from his paper, read at Sheffield on March 5th, 1892, at the Conference of Employers and Workmen arranged by the Sheffield Federated Trades Council.

H. DE B. GIBBINS.  
R. A. HADFIELD.

*September, 1892.*

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[R. A. H. and H. DE B. G.]

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# A SHORTER WORKING DAY.

## CHAPTER I.

### ORIGIN AND CAUSES OF THE MOVEMENT FOR A SHORTER WORKING DAY.

[R. A. H. and H. DE B. G.]

Introductory—Its Human Interest—Advance of the Workman—The Influence of Education—The *Zeitgeist*—The “Machine-Minder”—Special Cases: Railway Men—The Select Committee on Railway Hours—Miners—Shop-Assistants.

#### § I. *Introductory.*

THE movement for a shorter working day, whether of eight, nine, or ten hours, is one of the most recent of the many reforms proposed at the present time. It is a reform which possibly will have the deepest, if not perhaps the most apparent, effect not only upon our whole industrial system, but upon our commercial and national prosperity at large. For it would seem at first sight as if any limitation in the hours of labour would mean a limitation of the production of wealth in a country; and though we may not fall into the fallacy of certain older economists and believe that “wealth is everything and man is nothing,” it must be

admitted that an increase or decrease of national wealth forms a subject of serious consideration. It may be all very well to advocate an industrial or social reform, but before doing so we must always consider whether this reform is a luxury which in our present stage of industrial development we can afford, or whether after all we are not yet sufficiently advanced to proceed with it. It is upon this point that the discussion will really hinge, and in view of the deep, practical interest which all classes of the community are now taking in the subject, it may not be amiss to inquire what are likely to be the results of a general adoption of a shorter day, or of legislative action tending in this direction. Being a question which apparently will deeply influence the productive capacity of the country, it is one which must of course be treated primarily from an economic standpoint.

### § 2. *Its Human Interest.*

At the same time the true economist, that is to say, the man who is master of his subject and does not allow political economy to master him, will perceive, readily enough, that the economic side of the question, though it may be of prime importance, is nevertheless not the only side to be considered. There is a deep human interest in the question of shorter hours, quite apart from any economic considerations of wages and profits, and of any pecuniary gain or loss. And it is just because of this deep human interest that it has taken so firm a hold upon the imaginations, not only of many of the working-classes, but upon many other people who, at first sight, would appear to be only slightly concerned with this topic. For it is a question that con-

cerns the work of millions of labouring humanity in almost every civilized country.

There is, in fact, a general craving throughout the civilized world, America, the continent of Europe, and Australia, for a consideration of this living question, one that concerns the everyday life of countless multitudes. Now, when there is a widespread craving in the minds of men, there is generally some good reason for it. There is no doubt that the craving for more leisure and an easing of toil has been growing for many years. Probably to men now dead and gone we owe much of the heart-stirring now existing on this and kindred subjects. The thoughts of one generation are often the deeds of the next, and so it is in this instance. A little band of workers, hardly more than a generation ago, gradually evolved the principles of more freedom for the toilers, and their thoughts have begun to tell. Lord Shaftesbury, with his "Deeds, not words"; Kingsley, with his manly Christianity; Robert Owen, who ever struggled for the right, are examples of the men who have been, in most cases unconsciously, the pioneers of the Eight Hours Movement of to-day.

### § 3. *The Advance of the Workman.*

For it was by their influence that the life of the labourer was gradually lifted out of the degradation and misery of the first half of the nineteenth century, and he himself was taught the new possibilities of leisure, and, in course of time, even of culture that were now open to him. The first taste of that leisure and culture has led to a desire for more; and it is, in fact, just because the hours of labour have been lessened in the not remote past that there is now a still stronger desire for them to be lessened even more in

the future. It is just because an advance has been made already that the working-man now desires to advance still further. The mainspring of a working-man's life is now no longer outside himself but in him; and therefore he wishes to develop himself more fully and more humanly, both in his domestic and industrial life. Mr. Gladstone, who, at present, does not believe in an Eight Hours Day, has expressed this point very clearly in one of the best articles he has ever written on labour questions ("Labour, its Rights and Responsibilities," in *Lloyd's News*, May 4th, 1890). "It is now full time," he says, "for every labouring man to bethink himself what all these political and social advances mean, what are the changes either accomplished or begun in his condition, and how far and in what way with his condition he himself ought to change. Taking the history of the world as a whole, the mainspring of a working-man's life has been placed, for the most part, as it has with a young child; as with a slave; at times almost as with a domesticated animal; that is to say, it has lain outside himself. For very large numbers of working-men it has now gradually shifted to a point lying within his base, and is coming nearer and nearer to the very centre of his own being. Instead of being principally controlled by others, he now principally, and from year to year increasingly, controls himself." Such being the case, it is not surprising that he wishes also to have some voice in the disposal of his time, both for work and recreation. And it is this question of self-control that to the writers seems so essentially the kernel of this whole question of the length of labour hours. If the workman has decided to have shorter hours, and will take the risk thereof, on what grounds is such a concession to be denied him any more than the

power of voting, the ballot box, factory legislation, or any other of the numerous Acts that have all tended in the same direction, that is, to his gradual elevation? The only real objection to such a concession can be that the workman may injure other people by thus benefiting himself. Whether by working shorter hours than at present he will actually do so, it is the business, *inter alia*, of the present writers to enquire; and we shall, in another chapter, try to ascertain what harm, if any, has been caused by an Eight Hours Day in those cases in which it has been adopted.

#### § 4. *The Influence of Education.*

But, turning now to another cause of the present movement, we find that the spread of education among the working-classes has much to answer for. In *The History of David Grieve*, where the mill-hand's life of some thirty or fifty years ago is depicted, one of the characters is described as remarking that "he had naw moor use for a book than a coo has for clogs." His successor of to-day frequents free libraries, attends University Extension lectures, goes up to Oxford for a "summer meeting," and not unfrequently sends his son to one of the older Universities to take his degree. It is, of course, obvious that this changed state of education could not fail to bring with it some corresponding change in the workman's views as to how he is to spend his life. After a taste of the tree of knowledge, even though it be growing only in a free library; after a glimpse at the treasures of art that public picture galleries have opened up to him; after even the smattering of science gained from popular penny lectures and museums, it is hardly to be expected that the educated labourer of

to-day will continue to work as long as he did before without leaving himself time to indulge the new tastes and pleasures that education has brought with it. Of course we know that it is by no means every labouring man who attends scientific lectures and potters about art galleries, and, indeed, we only mention these as instances of higher culture generally. But it cannot be denied by any one who has known the history of the working-classes of this country during the present reign, that there has been, on the whole, a great and permanent advance made by them in many things that pertain to a fuller, more intelligent, and more human life.

One of our highest and best thinkers, Matthew Arnold, has said, "Know the best things that have been said and thought in the world." This applies to all, and yet how could it be recommended to the toilers, most of whom probably commence work at eleven or twelve years of age, and thenceforward have so little opportunity to improve themselves?

It may of course be said that the working-classes do not try to follow Matthew Arnold's advice, but one pound of practical proof is better than tons of theory, and that self-culture is sought after, has been proved by the rapidly increasing demands on the educational facilities of this country, from the University to the Board School, facilities which have until lately been so grudgingly granted. The interesting information from an engineering firm in London who have adopted the eight hours system (quoted on p. 140), shows in a direct and positive way that the workers are desirous to improve themselves, and when the chance is given, they take it. Improvements in this direction are the surest and best ways to fight the terrible problems of

drunkenness and gambling, which are so rife among the working-classes, but which are by no means confined to them. Give a man a taste for higher things, and, though he may still be fallible, he is much more likely to cultivate self-restraint, as well as to see that the old game is not worth the candle. Under our present system it is often a puzzle how the majority of one's fellow-citizens are able to bring up themselves and their children respectably. That they succeed in doing so as much as they do is wonderful.

### § 5. *The "Zeitgeist."*

But the advance of education alone does not account for the Eight Hours Movement. It is connected with the whole spirit of the age, and the general conditions of our time. Let a human being have a simple environment, and he may be satisfied with little. In former days he was thus satisfied, but if ever there was a complex condition of affairs in human history it is now, and consequently men's wants have grown more complex also. The easier access to what were formerly considered luxuries, the much greater amount of brain work, and the higher pressure all round, demand altered surroundings and conditions, even for manual labour. Besides, owing to this complex condition of modern life with its many requirements, more highly-developed faculties and qualifications are now demanded from, and are absolutely essential to, our workers. They are expected to reach a higher mental standard just as much, in their way, as any professional man. It is the same in all walks of life. Talk to an aspirant in any direction—a medical or legal student will tell you the examinations get more difficult each year; the School Board

raises its standard ; the Institution will not receive new members unless passing a stricter scrutiny ; and it is the same in the humbler walks of life. Can, therefore, those who have, or are supposed to have, the power to grant them, refuse better facilities to cope with these increased requirements to those in more subordinate positions ? The well-worn maxim, " Knowledge is power," applies to every man. Ignorance is seen, even by the poorest of the poor, to be intolerable. In short, that increased mental cultivation, from the highest to the lowest, is now more necessary than ever, is generally admitted ; but with our present long hours for the adult workers, and the present low limit of age for the child worker, how can this necessary knowledge be acquired ?

Compare the best engineer of fifty years ago with the present highly-trained expert. Practically speaking, most of our manufacturing operations were then but toy industries. Our knowledge of electricity, that modern giant about which there is yet so much to learn, was hardly existent. It was the same in the chemical and metallurgical worlds. Pick up any book supposed to describe the state of technical matters existing fifty years ago, and much of its contents seem perfect jargon to almost the simplest amongst us to-day. Imagine Faraday talking through the telephone to Edison ! The greatest scientific philosopher that has probably lived in this country would not know as much about the why and wherefore of this modern application of electricity as a workman's lad of eighteen or twenty years of age now being instructed in an ordinary technical-school. The elementary knowledge of to-day is far ahead of even the philosopher of but little more than a generation ago. Such comparisons, perhaps, better enable us to realize the

enormous changes that have occurred, and show us that corresponding social changes are requisite too.

Can one wonder, in face of these tremendous changes, that thoughts and aspirations of betterment permeate the community? Indeed, it would be more wonderful if it were not so. Some amongst us think the good old times were best, when handicrafts flourished more than now, but probably if the actual and existing state of the surroundings of those times were before us to-day, even with our drawbacks we should not want to change positions. But this is no reason why we should wish to stand still. And, if what has been referred to in such a general way is true, it means that all sections of the community require more time for mental exercise and cultivation.

#### § 6. *The "Machine-Minder."*

This is true even in the case of what is called "unskilled labour," which is often not so unskilled as some would suppose. Even the mere "machine-minder" requires a considerable amount of technical knowledge. Recently, one of the writers heard a most eloquent address from the President of the Electrical Engineers on the value of technical education, with much of which he heartily agreed, but in common with many others, the speaker did not seem altogether fair when referring to the "machine-minder." In the first place, this necessary adjunct in the progress of modern technical industry, if even only minding a spinning loom, serving one of the numerous labour-saving tools that is all but human, or the like, wants to know something more about the marvellous phenomena which occur in this wonderful world in which he lives. Encourage him in this idea,

and he will be all the more valuable to his employer and the community at large when he understands better the conditions of his surroundings, or knows some little of that knowledge which men of science have from time to time been able to discover and lay before the world.

Then again, the "mere machine-minder," as the learned professor giving the inaugural address referred to termed him, has to have a good deal of self-acquired technical education, which ought to be recompensed much more than it is. If the professor in question, or some of his supporters, were set to work for nine hours to "mind" a cotton-spinning machine, work a steam hammer, take a lathe in hand, "pull a pot of steel out of the hole," forge so many dozens of files, and some other little matters of that kind, the writer is inclined to think that sticking-plaster would be at a premium, the capabilities of some of our public hospitals and dispensaries severely taxed, and the familiar faces who so earnestly "lectured" us would be for some time absent from their daily duties. It is possible that an Eight Hours Bill of a stringent kind would soon pass to its third reading in a certain house at Westminster. As Professor Thorold Rogers has remarked, in reference to agricultural "unskilled" labour, there is often as much skill required in mechanical as in brain work; and employers would be none the worse if these points were recognized more fairly.

There is another reason, too, why shorter hours are demanded. As knowledge grows, so does a distaste for mere drudgery and mechanical work. Such work of necessity becomes more disagreeable. However much this way of looking at it may be objected to, such is the fact, and probably the only satisfactory way to meet the case is to grant increasing leisure, relying more upon mechanical

aids, scientific discoveries, and the like to help us to make good any deficiency in the worker's product. Fortunately, so far, and it will probably continue to be so, modern improvement has far outrun the slight benefits that have been given from time to time to the workers. In fact, generally speaking, where shorter hours exist, there is also the highest output (cf. p. 108).

"The pace of the mind," as the *Spectator* has recently called it, tends to be quickened by the necessity of obtaining the same results in a shorter time. Labour-saving inventions are discovered, or more economical methods applied to counteract the diminution of manual toil. And all this has a very close bearing upon the topic we are discussing. "If 'mind,'" remarks the *Spectator*, "could be quickened by any outside influence [such as an eight hours day] without injury to other powers, intelligent life would become much longer and fuller. If the mental pace of a race could be doubled, they ought, in the highest sense, to live longer, and one wonders a little whether any such change does, unperceived, go on. One has a fancy that the English middle-class has, in the last two generations, gained so greatly that the gain is perceptible in mental quickness. Much more of such quickness is certainly required of them both in business and the professions, and there is plenty of answer to the demand. If that is true, it would seem probable that continuous education does develop what horsey men call 'a turn of speed' in the mind, as well as reflective power and self-control, and that is not an unsatisfactory result. Again, lower down in the world the testimony, though not perfect, is that we may believe from approximate enquiry, that nearly all teachers, and especially female teachers, admit that the children of the educated

poor are far more easy to teach than the children of the uneducated poor ; that they have not only more 'receptive' minds, which may only mean better memories, but that their minds move positively quicker."

### § 7. *Special Reasons : Railway Men.*

But besides the general mental and psychological influences alluded to in the preceding pages, there have come into operation other very important causes that have led to the proposal of a Shorter Working Day as a measure of practical politics. Chief among these causes we should place the deep impression made upon the mind of the public in general, and that of the working-classes in particular, by the revelations of recent years as to the unduly long hours worked by the victims of the sweating system, and by railway men. The hours of miners' work have also been the subject of much discussion ; and as the miners are, on the whole, a strongly-organized body, a miners' Eight Hours Bill has come within a measurable distance of becoming law. Shop-assistants are another class whose excessive hours of work have roused the sympathy of a small section of the public, but as they do not possess a strong class organization, they will probably have to suffer for some considerable time longer. But the case of miners and railway men has now become so pressing, that we may briefly state some of the main facts about the employment of these two great classes of workers.

To take the railway servants first. A conviction has long been growing among the general public that their hours of duty were excessive, and a Board of Trade report bearing on this subject was very opportunely presented to Parliament

just as the great strike of Scottish railway servants in 1890-91 was drawing to a close, and in time for the debate in the House of Commons on the same question, which is of course one of considerable general and economic interest. Mr. Channing's resolution on that occasion stated strongly the case for shorter hours in railway work from the point of view of public safety, and may be quoted in full—

“That in the opinion of this House the excessive hours of labour imposed on railway servants by the existing arrangements of the railway companies of the United Kingdom constitute a grave social injustice, and are a constant source of danger both to the men themselves and to the travelling public, and that it is expedient that the Board of Trade should obtain powers by legislation to issue orders, where necessary, directing railway companies to limit the hours of work of special classes of their servants, or to make such a reasonable increase in any class of their servants as will obviate the necessity for overtime work.”

Speaking in opposition to the motion the President of the Board of Trade said—

“I am bound to admit that, in my opinion, formed on the reports of Inspectors of the Board of Trade, the safety of the employés of the railways and of the travelling public is affected by excessive overtime. In the returns of 1889 and 1890 there are 122 inquiries made into railway accidents by the inspectors of the Board of Trade. In fourteen of these cases the accident was found to have been more or less due to excessive hours of work on the part of railway servants, principally drivers and firemen, and twenty-four separate instances of overtime were given in relation to those cases.”

The intention of the Report was to show the numbers

and proportions of certain classes of railway servants who were on duty in the months of September, 1889, and March, 1890, on the railways of the United Kingdom for more than twelve hours at a time, or who, after being on duty more than twelve hours, were allowed to resume work with less than eight hours' rest. The classes of servants dealt with are passenger guards, goods guards, engine-drivers, firemen, signalmen, and examiners. If we summarize the totals shown by the return it is ascertained that the numbers of railway servants of the first five grades who work more than twelve hours a day were 34,958, as against 33,891 in a corresponding month of the previous year. It seems that whereas in nearly all other industries the tendency of the last few years has been to shorter hours, on the railways the tendency is to lengthen them. The table on opposite page shows the hours of railway servants in detail.

#### § 8. *The Select Committee on Railway Hours.*

Soon after this report was issued, the first sittings of a Select Committee of the House of Commons took place, which had been appointed in February, 1891, to enquire into the subject. The appointment of this committee was largely due to the facts disclosed in the Scotch Railway Strike of December, 1890, and January, 1891, which strike, although it failed at the time, has had considerable influence in directing people's minds towards the consideration of labour problems.

The evidence of two witnesses from the Railway Department of the Board of Trade is worth noticing, as being directly contrary to the general tenor of the report quoted above. Mr. Courtenay Boyle, assistant secretary, stated

Table showing chief Railway Companies employing certain of their servants fifteen hours per day, with monthly percentage of those working over twelve hours, allowed to resume after less than eight hours' rest.

Name of Company.	ENGINEMEN AND FIREMEN.	GOODS GUARDS.	SIGNALMEN.
	Monthly percentage of persons, after more than 12 hours' duty, resuming with less than 8 hours' rest.	Monthly percentage of persons, after more than 12 hours' duty, resuming with less than 8 hours' rest.	Monthly percentage of persons, after more than 12 hours' duty, resuming with less than 8 hours' rest.
	March, 1890.	March, 1890.	March, 1890.
Brecon and Merthyr	25.0	...	...
Cheshire Lines Committee	6.85	9.37	2.30
Eastern and Midlands	28.30	...	...
Furness	3.92	...	...
Great Eastern	.49	.43	.09
Great Northern	3.45	8.04	.18
Great Western	2.89	...	.51
Hull, Barnsley, and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock	25.48	24.4	3.66
Lancashire and Yorkshire	8.37	13.30	1.18
London and North-Western	2.15	1.74	.7
London and South-Western	...	2.83	...
Lond., Brighton & Sth. Coast	50.87	...	...
London, Chatham, & Dover	5.98	...	1.48
London, Tilbury, & Southend	6.35	...	...
Manchester, Sheffield, & Linc.	3.80	40.42	.28
Midland	1.19	10.26	.53
North-Eastern	2.49	1.24	.47
North London	...	...	...
Rhymney	59.18	27.50	...
South-Eastern	21.64	...	...
Taff Vale	22.16	16.74	...
Somerset & Dorset Joint Line	17.24	...	1.63
Wrexham, Mold, & Connah's Quay	140.0	123.08	...
Caledonian	.07	...	...
Glasgow & South-Western	.69	...	...
North British	18.51	11.00	2.43
Belfast & Northern Counties	.19	...	...
Great Northern of Ireland	...	117.07	1.74
Great Southern & Western of Ireland	2.48	...	...
Midland and Great Western of Ireland	8.86	2.77	...
Waterford & Central Ireland	93.33	...	80.0
Waterford & Limerick	...	...	...

\* \* \* This Table, and the remarks accompanying it, are taken from the *Economic Journal* of March, 1891.

that there was of late years a marked decrease in the amount of overtime worked on railways, and that much of this overtime consisted only in delays involving no active exertion. Major-General Hodgson, one of the inspectors, stated that he had made about 200 enquiries into railway accidents during the last three years, and could only remember one case in which the accident could be attributed to overtime. However, it is satisfactory to notice that he thought an eight hours day should be the limit in all "four-line signal-boxes," and that in railway servants' labour each day should stand for itself. The evidence of the secretaries of the three railway servants' organizations was naturally much more decisive in favour of a much shorter working day. Mr. H. Tait, of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants in Scotland, and Mr. E. Harford, of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants of the United Kingdom, both asked only for a ten hours day as a general rule, with an eight hours day in certain special kinds of work. Mr. Watson, of the General Railway Servants' Union, however, said his society, numbering 25,000 members, came into existence almost entirely to secure an eight hours day by Act of Parliament.

It was an unpleasant feature in the sittings of this Committee that several witnesses who were giving evidence before it were dismissed by their employers in consequence of what they had said, although in many cases the employers themselves, when re-examined upon this point, had to admit the truth of many of the most serious cases, and to admit, moreover, that they might certainly have been avoided.<sup>1</sup>

For instance, the General Manager of one of the chief Yorkshire lines had to admit the fact of a porter

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Economic Journal*, June, 1892, p. 410.

at Hipperholme working from Thursday to Sunday without intermission ; of a guard, named Foulds, working nineteen hours on end, and a guard at Wakefield working twenty-six hours, while the chief mechanical engineer of the same line admitted the entire accuracy (except in one solitary instance) of a table submitted by an engine-driver, showing sometimes more than 111 hours' work in the week, and frequently more than twenty-nine and thirty hours at a stretch. Although pleading special requirements of the traffic, they had to own that these cases of long hours were quite preventible, though they claimed that their companies were already beginning to introduce some improvements.

When the Select Committee finally issued this report in June, 1892, it admitted that most of the grievances complained of by railway servants were justified, and especially condemned the general practice of long hours and constant working of overtime. They were of opinion that signalmen and shunters in busy places should not work longer than eight hours a day, and that the hours of others should not exceed ten, which is all that a large number of railway men have ever asked for. The Committee also expressed the opinion that the "booked" time of drivers, firemen, and guards should not exceed sixty-six hours per week, nor twelve hours in any one day. They were further of opinion that railway companies should submit to the Board of Trade satisfactory schedules of the "booked" time of their servants, under the penalty of £20 per day.

This report of the Select Committee is on the whole the most striking argument in favour of a shorter working day for railway men, being based as it is, not upon the statements of any one class specially interested in shorter hours, but upon the evidence given both by employers and

employed, whose interests were naturally in many cases most conflicting. Whether this reduction of hours should take place by Act of Parliament, or by voluntary efforts on the part of the railway servants themselves, is, of course, a question which has been hotly debated, but to an ordinary impartial observer the facts attending the Scotch strike before alluded to, would seem to show that independent efforts on the part of railway men are not always the best means of securing the object wished for.

### § 9. *Miners.*

The case for a shorter working day in regard to miners rests upon a totally different basis from that of railway servants. The most curious fact about the question of the miners' eight hours day is that a large number of miners have already got it, and therefore it may not seem quite clear why there should be so keen an agitation for its general introduction. The facts seem to be, however, that those miners who have it never obtained a shorter day by their own exertions, but owing to the fact that their employers themselves found this arrangement of time most convenient. The district in which the eight hours day is most general among miners is in Northumberland and Durham; in other districts the hours of work vary considerably, as we shall see later.

But before we discuss the hours of work it may be well to state, in the words of the Yorkshire Miners' Association themselves, the reason why they want the eight hours day. The reasons given are four: firstly, because of the unhealthy and unsanitary conditions of the mines; secondly, because the work is laborious and dangerous; thirdly,

because the men want more time for recreation, rest, and leisure ; and fourthly, because they wish to work more uniformly. After giving these reasons, the report of the Association goes on to state why miners desire to obtain the eight hours day by law and not by voluntary endeavour. The reasons are again four : firstly, because Parliament would do it more effectively ; secondly, because they want uniformity, which can only be secured by law ; thirdly, because it would lessen unhealthy competition in the coal trade, and thus bring about quietude at the collieries and interest for the safety of the mine instead of for increased output ; fourthly, because it will bring about a better feeling between working-men and their employers, and prevent the possibility of strikes and lock-outs which would probably occur if they adopted other than legislative means.

It will be noticed amongst the reasons given for wanting a shorter working day that no complaint is actually made that the present time is too long, but merely that more time is required for recreation and leisure. And indeed, if we examine the hours of labour actually worked in the mines in the United Kingdom, we do not find that they are so long as those worked in many other employments, although of course the peculiarly unpleasant nature of the miner's work must be taken into account. A statistical report supplied by the check-weighers and Union District Secretaries of the hours worked at collieries in every mining district in Great Britain except Durham, Northumberland, and Cleveland, and dated October, 1890, seems to show that at 223 collieries the working hours were eight per day or under, at 240 the hours were eight and a half or nine per day, and at 121 the hours were more than nine.<sup>1</sup> Those

<sup>1</sup> From Howell's *Trade Unionism, New and Old*, p. 181.

were the hours supposed to be worked at the face, but whether these hours were worked every day, or only four or five days in a week, is not stated, and therefore the report is deprived of much of its value. Far more exact information may be obtained from the Government return granted on the motion of Mr. Provand, as it gives the actual number of hours daily worked by miners and others at all the mines throughout Great Britain, together with the intervals for rest and meals, and the number of days usually worked in the week. There is an immense mass of detail in this report, and the time worked in various mining districts very often differs considerably, but the following table, drawn up by Mr. G. Howell, M.P., gives a very fair synopsis of the whole mass of figures.

District.	Average number of hours per day worked in the pit.	Usual number of days actually worked in each week.	Number of hours actually worked per week.
I. East Scotland	7.52	5.3	40.10
II. West Scotland	7.54	5.44	41.42
III. Newcastle	6.61	5.31	32.20
IV. Durham	6.27	5.66	34.00
V. Yorkshire	7.4½	4.9	35.20
VI. Manchester	7.82	5.53	42.00
VII. Liverpool	7.58	5.61	43.00
VIII. Midland	7.64	5.36	40.00
IX. North Wales, &c.	7.4	5.80	43.50
X. North Stafford	7.47	5.8	37.50
XI. South Stafford	7.62	5.15	38.50
XII. South-Western	7.42	5.65	39.50
XIII. South Wales	8.6	5.7	46.00

These figures seem to show that in no district except South Wales do men, working at the face, work more than forty-

eight hours per week, allowing thirty-nine minutes as the average time for descending, travelling underground, and returning to the surface. This calculation makes the time from bank to bank forty-nine and a half hours in South Wales, forty-seven in North Wales, forty-six in the Liverpool district, forty-five and a half in the Manchester district, while in all other cases the actual number of hours per week from bank to bank is under forty-five. Any one who has had experience of the habits of the mining population is well aware that the time for rest and recreation depends very much upon the miner himself, as they frequently leave their work for a day or two's holiday, and by no means invariably put in the average total of hours per week. But whatever may be the fact and figures of the case, so large a proportion of the mining population are in favour of an eight hours day by Act of Parliament, that there seems but little doubt that before long such an Act will have been passed. At the same time the miners themselves are not yet entirely agreed upon this question, but it is stated that about 212,000, or nearly one-half the total number, have declared in favour of it, and the National Federation of Miners supports two bills upon the subject. Though the miners' Eight Hours Bill did not originally proceed from this body, it has been adopted by it. The Eight Hours Bill of the session of 1890 and 1891 was, however, backed by only two out of five miners' representatives in the House of Commons. If passed it would have provided that a person shall not in any one day of twenty-four hours be employed underground in any mine for a period exceeding eight hours from the time of his leaving the surface of the ground to the time of his ascent thereto, except in the case of accident or any other emergency. Of course this bill was defeated, and so also

was Mr. Leake's bill, which was brought forward for the second reading on the 23rd March, 1892, and was lost only by the small majority of twelve. The voting on this bill is worth recording, chiefly because the labour members were equally divided upon it, and also because of the powerful speech in favour of the bill by Mr. Chamberlain. This politician, brushing aside all the usual talk about the interference of the State with adult persons of either sex, declared himself in favour of the principle once laid down by Professor Jevons, that "the state is justified in passing any laws, or even in doing any single act, which, without ulterior consequences, would add to the sum total of happiness." He further argued that an eight hours law would, without any ill effects, add immensely to the happiness of half a million miners in the United Kingdom. His opinion in favour of the bill was based upon the fact that short hours did not mean diminished output, a point to which we shall refer later (see p. 108). In the course of his remarks he gave some very powerful illustrations of this now almost acknowledged fact from his own experience as a manufacturer. "When I was in business," said he, "(I am speaking of twenty years ago), my firm was working under great pressure twelve hours a day. Shortly afterwards the Factory Acts were applied to Birmingham, and we reduced the hours to ten a day. Some time later we voluntarily reduced the hours to nine a day, after the experiment at Newcastle of a nine hours engineers' day. We were working self-acting machinery. All the workmen had to do was to feed the machinery, and see the fires were kept in order. In this case, if in any, the product should be directly proportioned to the number of hours worked. What is the fact? When we reduced the hours from twelve to ten, a reduction of 17 per cent., the

reduction in the production was about 8 per cent., and when we again reduced the hours from ten to nine, which was a reduction of 10 per cent., the reduction of production was only 5 per cent." If the same argument could be applied, and we have little doubt that it can be, to the output from the collieries, there seems little reason to object to an Eight Hours Bill for miners if it would give them that uniformity of work, and that time for recreation and leisure, which they say they desire.

#### § 10. *Shop-Assistants.*

In dealing with the case of miners and railway servants, we have been considering two classes of the industrial population who possess strong Trades Unions and a very complete organization, and if these two classes cannot obtain an eight hours day, either by their own efforts, or by Act of Parliament, it seems there is very little chance for a much weaker and less independent class with practically no organization at all. Such a class are the assistants, both male and female, in shops; but the hardships of their case have so aroused sympathy, that public opinion has been sufficient to bring their case before the notice of Parliament. The London Early Closing Association, which was founded in 1842, had been going on for nearly half a century trying to obtain shorter hours of labour for its members by voluntary action, and no appeal was for many years made to the State, but the utter impossibility of ever attaining their object by these means, has at length compelled them to use the constitutional method of Parliamentary agitation. It is to Sir John Lubbock that the credit of initiating legislation upon this subject must be

given. The first step was taken in 1887. In the year before, a Committee of the House of Commons had been appointed to consider a bill promoted by Sir John Lubbock, for restricting the hours of labour of children and young persons employed in shops. The report of this Committee ran as follows—

“ Being satisfied that the hours of shop-assistants range in many places as high as from eighty-four to eighty-five hours per week, your Committee are convinced that such long hours must be generally injurious and often ruinous to health, and that the same amount of business might be compressed into a shorter space of time.” In consequence of this report, the bill referred to became law, under the title of the Shop Hours Regulation Act, 1886; but as a matter of fact this Act has been a complete failure, for it only applies to persons under the age of eighteen, places seventy-four hours as the limit of working time, and provides no machinery whatever for putting the law in force. A second bill was introduced in 1888 to provide that all shops should be closed not later than eight o’clock at night, and ten o’clock on Saturdays, but this was thrown out. There is now, however, a Shop Hours Regulation Bill before Parliament, which proposes to restrict the employment of women in shops to seventy-four hours per week, including meal-times, and it has been referred to a Select Committee of the House. As might be expected, the evidence given has been such as to lead all impartial observers to the opinion that it is high time that some restriction of these hours was imposed by law. As evidence of the long hours required of shop-assistants, the evidence of Miss Payne, who had been a shop-assistant for ten years in various districts in London, showed that while in Holloway the hours were only sixty-

three and a half per week, in Chelsea, Fulham, and Hammersmith they averaged from eighty to ninety, though a half-holiday was given once a month, and a fortnight's holiday in the summer. Most girls, she said, suffered in health from the long hours ; she had herself begun to do so after being two years in employment, and the doctor said her ill-health was due to long hours and continual standing. Her evidence on this point is confirmed by that of Dr. Lawson Tait, the well-known specialist in women's diseases, who states,<sup>1</sup> that from a large hospital experience he can say that the prolonged hours of labour to which young women are subjected in such occupations as millinery and shop-work generally, are extremely detrimental to their health. Mr. D. Corner, of the Early Closing Association, gave evidence that throughout London generally, the hours for drapers were seventy-five to eighty-seven, for bakers ninety-one, for grocers eighty to eighty-eight, and for boot-makers eighty to eighty-seven. He stated also that the majority of the shop-keepers were in favour of a reduction of hours, but from the selfishness of the public and the want of uniformity such as could be enforced by law, they were obliged to keep open for self-defence.<sup>2</sup>

Such then are three typical cases, in which hardly any one will deny that a shorter working day would be decidedly advantageous, if it could only be afforded. There are, of course, many other occupations, such as those of tramway and omnibus servants, clerks, hospital nurses, tailors, bakers, and last but not least, agricultural labourers, in which the hours of labour are longer than they need be, and could probably be reduced without much loss to the employer.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Eight Hours Day*, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> *Economic Journal*, June, 1892, p. 411.

They are sufficiently discussed by Messrs. Cox and Webb in their admirable book, entitled *The Eight Hours Day*, and we need not go into them here, as our object has been merely to give a few typical cases. The great question to be considered is whether England as a nation can afford to grant a shorter working day to the masses of the industrial population. If it could not be afforded, it is pretty certain it will never be granted, whatever the claims of sentiment and humanity may be. It will therefore be our duty, in another chapter, to inquire how far, generally speaking, it is possible for us to afford a shorter working day, and after discussing the question theoretically, with a due regard to the principles of political economy, to turn to those facts which political economists so often neglect, and see what has been the result of introducing an eight hours day in those countries where it is actually in force. Before discussing this point, however, it may be well to review the history of the Eight Hours Movement in Great Britain.

## CHAPTER II.

### HISTORY OF THE MOVEMENT IN ENGLAND.

[H. DE B. G.]

Early Times—Thorold Rogers' Statements—Thomas More—The Beginning of the Nineteenth Century—The Factory Acts—The Trades Unions Agitation—Growth of the Movement—The New Unionism—The Dundee Congress—The Liverpool and Newcastle Congresses—The May-Day Demonstrations—The Deputation to Lord Salisbury—Mr. Gladstone and the Movement. [Appendix : The Interview with Mr. Gladstone.]

#### § I. *Early Times.*

THE movement for a shorter working day is after all no new thing, but rather a recurrence to a state of things which prevailed in earlier centuries. If we are to accept the statements of Professor Thorold Rogers, the artisan and labourer of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries only worked eight hours per day as a rule, and were paid for overtime. As Professor Rogers' statement has been severely criticized by other economists, it may be well perhaps to give it in his actual words.<sup>1</sup> “ The winter's wages are about 25 per cent. less than those of other seasons, but the winter seems to have been limited to the months of December and January. This fact, which I have frequently noticed, is proof that the hours of labour were not long. They seem

<sup>1</sup> *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*, pp. 180, 542.

to have been not more than eight hours per day, and at a later period in the history of labour the eight hours day seems to be indicated by the fact that extra hours are paid for at such a rate as corresponds to the ordinary pay per hour for eight hours, being a little in excess. Hence the artisan, if he were minded to do so, would have time during summer for some agricultural employment ; it would seem that this occupation for spare time was not unusual, for I have found employers of artisans occasionally purchasing agricultural produce from the mason and carpenter, or from their wives. Extra hours are often paid for when the work is pressing and time was an object. . . Extra hours, sometimes as many as forty-eight in a week, are frequently paid for by the King's agents (Henry VIII.) when hurried work was needed. Even when the Act of Elizabeth and the regulations of the Quarter Sessions prescribed a day of twelve hours all the year round, two and a half hours were allowed for rest, and the day was brought down on an average to nine and a half hours."

Those who believe that a shorter working day often results in better work will find their theory confirmed also by Professor Rogers, for he goes on to remark : "Now the quality of the work in the old times of which I have written is unquestionable. It stands to this day a proof of how excellent ancient masonry was. I am persuaded that such perfect masonry would have been incompatible with a long hours day. The artisan who is demanding at this time an eight hours day in the building trades is simply striving to recover what his ancestors worked by five or six centuries ago. It is only to be hoped that he will emulate the integrity and the thoroughness of the work which his ancestor performed."

§ 2. *Thomas More's Opinion.*

Another proof, indirect this time, of the prevalence of the comparatively short working day in the Middle Ages, whether eight hours or slightly more, is to be found in the fact that when Sir Thomas More in the *Utopia* wished to advocate an ideal period of labour he put it at six hours only ; which seems to indicate that the actual working day of that time cannot have been much more than two or three hours longer. Of course More knew that such a radical reform as a six hours day would meet with violent opposition, not only from those who are interested in maintaining the longest hours for labour, but also from those who honestly believed, as many do to-day, that such a limitation would have disastrous effects upon industry. So he promptly meets all objections in the following words : " Now the time appointed for labour is to be narrowly examined, otherwise you may imagine that since there are only six hours appointed for work they may fall under a scarcity of all necessary provisions. But it is so far from being true that this time is not sufficient for supplying them with plenty of all things, either necessary or convenient, that it is rather too much ; and this you will easily apprehend if you consider how great a part of all other nations is quite idle. First, women generally do little, who are the half of mankind. And if some women are diligent their husbands are idle. Then consider the great company of idle priests. Add to these all rich men, chiefly those that have estates in land, who are called noblemen and gentlemen, together with their families, made up of idle persons kept more for show than for use. Add to these all those strong and lusty beggars

that go about pretending some disease and excuse for their begging, and upon the whole account you will find that the numbers of those by whose labours mankind is supplied is much less than perhaps you imagine." As a matter of fact, the number of those by whose labours mankind is supplied in England and Wales at the present day are only about seven millions out of twenty-six millions, the number of producers (that is to say, all persons engaged in agricultural, manufacturing, mines, building, furniture-making, and so forth) being barely six millions, and the number of distributors, that is, all shop-keepers, merchants, drink-sellers, tailors and so on, being one and a half millions.

### § 3. *The Beginning of the Nineteenth Century.*

But whatever ideals More may have had, or whatever hours the workman of the Middle Ages actually worked, his descendants in the beginning of the nineteenth century had certainly a most excessive day of toil, and ever since 1800 there has been a steady agitation on foot, now in one class of workmen and now in another, for a shorter working day. Nor can it be said that this agitation has so far been unreasonable, while a short survey of the history of the movement for shorter hours of labour during this century will show how far its object has been attained.

At the beginning of the present century the ordinary working day of the English artisan appears to have varied from eleven to fourteen hours, but in the mills and factories which the industrial revolution brought into existence, the hours were far longer. In 1817 the stocking-makers of Leicester were working fourteen and fifteen hours per day, but even these were not so long as the hours of children who were employed

in factories as “apprentices.” These unfortunate children, upon the condition of whose labour one of the present writers has written elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> often worked from sixteen to eighteen hours per day, and the first Act passed to limit this toil in 1802 only reduced the day to twelve hours, while children who were not pauper-apprentices, but were sent to the mills by their parents, could be worked as long as their employer chose. To meet the evils of this merciless system, Sir Robert Peel in 1819 got a second Factory Act passed, which placed the limit of age at which a child should go to work at nine years, and fixed the hours of labour for children between nine and sixteen years of age at seventy-two hours per week, exclusive of meal-times. In 1825 a rather more comprehensive measure was passed, including certain classes of factories hitherto omitted, and provision was made for the first time for a Saturday half-holiday. In 1831 Sir John Hobhouse succeeded in going a step further in the direction of reducing children’s hours of work, for by his Act the labour of all persons under eighteen was limited to sixty-nine hours per week, and no person under the age of twenty-one was allowed to be engaged in night-work.

#### § 4. *The Factory Acts.*

It was shortly after this that the famous agitation for the ten hours day began amongst the working-classes, under their now almost forgotten leader, Richard Oastler.<sup>2</sup> Oastler was supported in Parliament by Mr. T. Sadler and Lord Ashley (afterwards the famous Earl of Shaftesbury), and these philanthropists succeeded in calling the attention of

<sup>1</sup> *English Social Reformers* : H. de B. Gibbins.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 111—137.

the country to the dreadful conditions of labour in English factories, and the cruelties daily perpetrated there. It is not necessary now to dilate upon this, and it is sufficient for the present purpose to say that a bill was introduced by the Government in 1833 by which children aged nine to thirteen were to work only forty-eight hours per week, young persons from thirteen to eighteen years of age were to work sixty-nine hours, but all persons over eighteen had to work as long as their employers chose. This Act of course did a great deal of good, but many of its regulations were repeatedly evaded by employers, and consequently the agitation for a ten hours day had to be continued. It received a considerable impetus from the horrifying disclosures made as to the conditions of labour in mines in 1840, and from the Mines Regulation Act passed in 1842; for the Commission that had been appointed to investigate the conditions of the mining industry also issued a second report, dealing with "Trades and Manufactures other than Textile." In 1844 an Act was passed regulating the work of *adult* women (not merely young persons) in the textile trades, but the greatest struggle occurred three years later (1847), when the Ten Hours Bill was introduced by Mr. Fielden, for in that bill male as well as female adult labour was to be interfered with. In spite of the fiercest opposition, both from interested classes like the manufacturers, and from well-meaning people who did not understand what they were talking about and thought that the most sacred principles of political economy and personal liberty were being violated, Mr. Fielden's bill was passed. Human nature, however, being what it is, employers contrived to evade it as they had done the others, and consequently it was found necessary in 1850 to pass a still more stringent Act, and then at last the ten hours day

became an accomplished fact. "In the thirty years that followed," Mr. John Morley remarks in his life of Cobden, "the principle has been extended with astonishing perseverance," but it is hardly necessary to go into the details of subsequent Acts, as they were merely amplifications and supports of what had already been done. We must turn now to the agitation for a shorter working day that has been carried on not inside but outside Parliament.

### § 5. *The Trades Unions Agitation.*

The Factory Acts of course affected at first only the textile districts, and in no case perhaps would they have had much influence outside those districts, if the laws which prevented the combination of workmen for discussing their own interests had not been repealed in 1824. But after this date the Trades Unions which were now rapidly formed began to make their power felt. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers, which was formed chiefly in consequence of the great strike in 1851 and 1852, really had for its object the obtaining of a genuine ten hours day, and the abolition of overtime worked in a systematic manner. In 1853 the London building trades, who had had a ten hours day for some considerable time, now started a Nine Hours Movement, but the real struggle did not come till 1858, and even then the men had to give way. And it was found by the Committee of the Social Science Association, when they were inquiring in 1860 into the hours worked by Trade Societies, that the majority of artisans were still working sixty hours per week. But about this time the prosperous conditions of trade, and one or two successful strikes, led to a revival of the nine hours agitation, while

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even a vision of eight hours was already present to many amongst the agitators. But the most important historical fact in this labour agitation at this time was the paper read and the discussion which took place at the Trades Union Congress at Birmingham in 1869, in which a Mr. Swain of Manchester read a paper in favour of a further reduction of the hours of labour, urging the claims of health, mental cultivation, and physical recreation, and showing that production had increased at a more rapid rate after previous reductions of hours. After the paper was read, the following resolution was carried unanimously. "That it is the firm conviction as well as the duty of the trade representatives at this Congress to aid every fair and honourable movement which has for its object the shortening of the hours of labour, believing that it will aid in promoting morality and the physical and intellectual power of workmen, and assist in finding employment for the unemployed." It is pathetic to notice that the argument of finding work for the unemployed is brought up so early in the history of the movement as a reason in favour of a shorter day. Two years later, at the London Congress of 1871, the eight hours day was definitely adopted as the ideal by Trades Unionists, a resolution being unanimously carried that "The productive powers and skill of the operatives of this country have arrived at a state of perfection which guarantees that eight hours' labour a day will answer all the commercial, national, and domestic requirements of the population; and that moreover such a reduction is necessary on sanitary and moral grounds." The next Congress saw the proposal of the nine hours day made by representatives of the Textile Unions, and this point was frequently agitated for in Lancashire and Yorkshire till the Factory Act of 1874

reduced the hours of operatives to fifty-six and a half per week.

### § 6. *Growth of the Movement.*

In the meanwhile the feeling in favour of a shorter working day was growing stronger and stronger, although in 1878 and 1879 many employers made a desperate effort to restore the ten hours day. This feeling received a great deal of strength from the Socialist party, who now came more to the front in England. The great German Socialist, Karl Marx, had long ago (1867) advocated an eight hours day by Act of Parliament, but, like the works of most German economists, his theories were unknown in this country. But the more complete organization of the Socialist party, which took place about 1881, brought the ideas of Karl Marx very closely home to the minds of English working-men, and in about five years the idea of an Eight Hours Bill had become quite familiar to them.<sup>1</sup> The public opinion of the working-classes was rapidly becoming more favourable to this idea, when Mr. Tom Mann, in 1886, published a pamphlet upon the subject entitled *The Eight Hours Movement*, and it is to him that the rapid growth of the movement amongst the working-classes is largely to be attributed. At the Swansea Trade Congress of 1887 another resolution was proposed: "That the hours of labour in all Government works should be reduced to eight per day," but instead of this being carried, it was decided to instruct the Parliamentary Committee of the Congress to obtain a *plébiscite* of the members of the various Trades Unions upon the question. The circular of inquiry issued in conse-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Eight Hours Day*, p. 81.

quence of this instruction was not answered by a very large proportion of Trades Unions, the textile trades in particular neglecting it, owing to the apathy of their leaders upon this question. And here it may be remarked that most of the old Trades Unionists, including such well-known and tried leaders as Mr. George Howell and Mr. Broadhurst, are distinctly hostile in endeavouring to obtain a reduction of hours by Act of Parliament. The report just alluded to was laid before the Congress at Bradford in September, 1888, and it appeared therefrom that 22,720 Unionists were in favour of the eight hours limit per day, or forty-eight hours per week, and 4,097 were against it. Upon the question whether the limit should be sought by Act of Parliament or by voluntary methods 17,267 were in favour of legal action, and 3,819 against it. From these figures it was clear that although the circular had not been answered by so large a proportion of Trades Unionists as had been hoped, there was nevertheless a strong feeling in favour of an eight hours day to be obtained by law.

#### § 7. *The New Unionism. Dundee Congress.*

This feeling became stronger still in this same year (1888), owing to the rapid growth of what is termed the "New Unionism," led by John Burns, Tom Mann, and Ben Tillett, while an important strike which now occurred emphasized the need for the help of Parliament in addition to whatever could be done by voluntary association. The facts of this strike are as follows: One of the new unions, that of the Gasworkers and General Labourers, demanded and obtained without a strike, in November, 1888, a reduction of their hours from twelve to eight per day, and this decided success

at first caused it to appear as if a shorter working day could easily be obtained by the working-classes themselves without Parliamentary aid. But a year later (November, 1889) it was seen how unsubstantial was the basis upon which the reduction had been obtained, for after a long and severe struggle with their workmen the South Metropolitan Gas Company suddenly restored the twelve hours day, and having restored it proceeded to continue work upon this system, without their employés being able to make their resistance effective.<sup>1</sup> Many who had formerly been doubtful now saw that something more than the rough-and-ready method of a strike was needed.

Consequently the question of Parliamentary action now assumed an unexpected political importance, and as early as January, 1889, Mr. John Burns was elected to the London County Council upon a programme which included as one of its essential features an eight hours day for all public servants. In February, 1889, the Newcastle Labour Electoral Association sent a deputation to Mr. John Morley, which elicited the fact that that statesman was dead against any restriction of the hours of labour by law. Other politicians, however, began to see that the legal eight hours day had now come within the area of practical politics, and by this time (July, 1892) most of the candidates, for mining constituencies at least, are expected to pronounce clearly in favour of an Eight Hours Bill. The question was again brought forward at the Trades Union Congress at Dundee, in September, 1889, and the Parliamentary Committee presented the report of the voting upon this subject, the votes being: *for* the eight hours day 39,656, *against* it 67,390; in favour of Parliamentary action 28,511, against it 12,283. These

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Eight Hours Day*, p. 26.

figures, however, were at once challenged, because the Cotton Spinners' Societies had never been asked by the officers of their unions to give their opinion upon the subject, and finally, after a heated discussion, the whole return was rejected by the Congress.

### § 8. *The Liverpool and Newcastle Congresses.*

It was in the next year, at the now historical Liverpool Congress of 1890, that the Eight Hours Question was at last brought to a climax. The President spoke strongly in favour of an Eight Hours Bill, and a resolution was carried, by 193 to 155 (delegates') votes, "That the time has arrived when steps should be taken to reduce the working hours in all trades to eight per day, or a maximum of forty-eight per week; and while recognizing the power and need of trade organization, the Congress is of opinion that the speediest and best method of obtaining this reduction for the workers generally is by Parliamentary enactments." The next Congress, that of 1891, at Newcastle, was the largest and most powerful ever held, consisting of 620 delegates, representing no less than 1,302,855 members, and once again the eight hours day was the most absorbing question. This time, however, Congress hesitated curiously between "yes" and "no" for two days, first repeating its resolution of last year by a still larger majority, and then qualifying that resolution by declaring that any bill for reducing the hours of labour should be of a *permissive* character, and should not be put in operation without the consent of two-thirds of the organized members of any trade; and then, thirdly, it concluded by replacing this by another resolution, that legislation upon the hours of labour should be enforced upon all trades and occupations, except where a majority of

the organized members of any trade protested by ballot vote against it. The voting was as follows: *for* the Eight Hours Law 232, *against* 163; *for* the amendment which makes the law permissive 242, *against* 156; and *for* the third resolution 341, *against* 73. It would seem, therefore, that 73 members were opposed to all eight hour legislation, that 156 were in favour of an unconditional Eight Hours Law, while 150 did not vote, and the remaining 200 or so prefer the compromise of the third resolution.<sup>1</sup> It will thus be seen that the working-classes are still far from being united upon this absorbing topic.

### § 9. *The May-Day Demonstrations.*

But besides the discussions of the Trades Union Congress,<sup>2</sup> an important step forward has been taken by the Eight Hours Party in instituting an annual May-day demonstration in favour of an eight hours day by Act of Parliament. It was the International Trades Union Congress of 1889 that appointed the 1st of May, 1890, for a simultaneous international demonstration in favour of an Eight Hours Law. Consequently a demonstration was held in Hyde Park on the first Sunday in May, 1890, when no less than sixteen platforms had to be provided for speakers, and it is said that at least a quarter of a million persons were present.

In the same month a Conference was invited to meet at Berlin, by the German Emperor, to discuss international methods of bettering the conditions of the working-classes, but with the fatal stupidity which occasionally overcomes the Conservative party, Lord Salisbury refused to allow the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Economic Journal*, December, 1891.

<sup>2</sup> For the 1892 Congress, see Appendix to this chapter, p. 59.

English delegates to this Conference even to discuss the question of limiting the hours of labour for men. Nevertheless, both Liberal and Conservative politicians began in this year to express themselves more or less clearly upon the subject of an Eight Hours Bill for miners, and the limitation of the hours of railway servants ; and in the next year the May-day demonstration was again held throughout Europe. The most noteworthy of the demonstrations was the London one in Hyde Park, for although it has been said that very little enthusiasm was expressed, yet the mere number of those present proclaimed a remarkable advance and consolidation of working-class opinion in favour of the legal eight hours. Some of the building trades, especially the carpenters, unwilling to wait for law, acted on their own account and struck for forty-seven hours a week, and obtained it from a few firms, including the Co-operative Wholesale Society. Once again in 1891 the annual demonstration has taken place, and did all for the advance of the question which a demonstration can do, in point of numbers. Perhaps it has done a little more, for shortly afterwards, on the 11th of May, a deputation organized by the London Trades Council was listened to by Lord Salisbury and Mr. A. J. Balfour, these Conservative statesmen having perceived that whether the subject could be discussed at the Berlin Conference or not, it had become absolutely necessary to discuss it in England.

#### § 10. *The Deputation to Lord Salisbury.*

Lord Salisbury chiefly occupied himself in pointing out to the deputation, in statesman-like and measured terms, the risks that an eight hours day might entail, and

it cannot be said, even from the point of view of those who differ from him, that his remarks were either unreasonable or unwise. The Premier openly declared his strong sympathy with the desire to shorten the hours of labour, but he did not share the belief of the working-man that legislature can entirely settle the difficulty for them. "In the speeches I have heard," said he to the deputation, "the tone has been that action by strikes is difficult, rough, dangerous, disadvantageous, and that action by legislation is easy, prompt, and certain. Are you quite so sure about that? You will have tremendous resistance to meet. Of course, if it is true that the employers desire it, the thing will come of itself, and come about peaceably; but if you go to legislation it is upon the assumption that the employers do not desire it, and then they will not assist you. If so, the employers will resist you, and they will not only resist you to the utmost of their power, but they will have on their side, not only the majority of their own class, but a minority of your class. There is a minority of your class which does not like legislation, and they will assist the action of the employers. You will therefore only have a certain proportion of the electorate in your favour. Even supposing you obtained a majority, and you passed your Bill through, I must ask you as working-men to trust us, as working-men who work more than eight hours a day—I must ask you to trust us at first sight and *prima facie* for the assertion that legislation, if it is to operate against the earnest, bitter, sincere feeling of a strong and powerful class, is almost certain to produce something totally different from that which its authors intended." Lord Salisbury's words did not carry conviction to the hearers. When he said, "You are trying a tremendous experiment, which has never been

tried before," there were cries of "We will risk it"; but whether this was because his hearers knew that the experiment *had* been tried before, and that the risk was not so serious as the Premier had imagined, or whether it was because they were simply carried away by the enthusiasm engendered by opposition, we have no means of knowing. Be that as it may, Lord Salisbury returned to the attack, and proceeded next to urge the objection that shorter hours meant less pay.

Another serious difficulty of an eight hours day, he said, was the financial aspect of the result of adopting it. Some of the speakers had assumed that those who ask for eight hours a day will earn as much wages as now they get for working longer hours. "What possible ground have you," asked Lord Salisbury of the deputation, who had just before cheered the above sentiment, "for saying so? It is a most marvellous conviction. I have seen it stated in public speeches and on public platforms, and it fills me with astonishment. I cannot possibly conceive the intellectual process by which that belief can be arrived at. It assumes that the consumption is constant—that is to say, it assumes that there will always be the same amount of consumers consuming the same amount of goods. But the mass of the consumers in the world are living up to their incomes. They cannot spend more than they do now, and if you make the thing which is to be sold dearer, there will be less of the thing consumed. If you pay for eight hours' work the same amount of wages that you pay for ten hours' work—that is to say, one-fourth more than you do now—you will to that extent increase the price of the goods you have to sell, you will diminish the number of consumers, you will diminish the market, and consequently you will

diminish the employment of workmen in production in the industries of this country." These truths however, as enunciated by Lord Salisbury, again carried no conviction to the minds of the deputation—possibly because the deputation felt that they knew little of political economy, and cared for it rather less. The assumption underlying the argument is that the shorter working day would not, of itself, give any compensation for the nominal loss of time incurred thereby; but, as we shall see later, that assumption is probably mistaken. The concluding remarks by Mr. A. J. Balfour really struck the deepest note, and though we cannot agree with him that the methods of legislation are as crude as those of strikes, we may frankly acknowledge that legislation is by no means omnipotent. Though quite in sympathy with the demand for a shorter day, Mr. Balfour did not see how Acts of Parliament could help to promote it. "Recollect," said he, "that, though coarse and crude are the methods of a strike, the methods of a legislature are almost as crude. They must deal with general conditions; they are not elastic, and they cannot fit themselves to the necessities of the trades in different parts of the country; and if you insist upon running all the industries of the country into one mould, without having regard to the conditions of those various industries, I think it possible that you will produce great hardship in those trades, and that one of the consequences will be to defeat your great object of giving employment to the unemployed." We do not quite follow the argument as to the unemployed, but the sum of it is true enough; for if the working-classes hope to solve the question of finding employment for those who are out of work by introducing a universal eight hours day, they will find themselves in the end hopelessly

mistaken. This question, however, may be discussed later, and we must continue the chronicle of the attempt to convert the politicians to the new doctrine.

### § 11. *Mr. Gladstone and the Movement.*

Not long after the deputation to the Conservative leaders, Mr. Gladstone, who had previously declined to receive a deputation, consented to alter his decision, and received one from the London Trades Council introduced by Mr. George Shipton, the secretary, on June 16th, 1892. The discussion between the veteran statesman and the labour leaders was so interesting that we have decided to reprint it as an appendix to this chapter, therefore all that need now be remarked is that he, as usual, did not commit himself to absolute opposition to the demand which his visitors made, but at the same time took up a decided position by saying that he could not place the Eight Hours Question in the forefront of his political programme. Even this was a great disappointment to many advanced Liberals, and the words of the *Daily Chronicle*, in its "leader" the day after the deputation, sum up what may be called the opinion of the more advanced of the Liberal party upon this historical interview. "Mr. Gladstone has spoken, and put his foot down upon the question; and we can now only regard with pain the terrible sacrifice which he is making of his life—not for those who love and reverence him, but for those who but the other day held him up in an historical manifesto to the odium of the world, in terms that would have been strong even if applied to the vilest of mankind. However, if Labour must be sacrificed to Home Rule, we may be pardoned for saying that it is now more incumbent than

ever on Mr. Gladstone to let us know what he is sacrificing 'the dumb suffering million' for. If he feels that his years and strength do not permit him to take up such a question as that of the hours of labour, because Home Rule sufficiently fills his hands, what becomes of the Newcastle programme? If Mr. Gladstone had been willing even to express the least sympathy with the effort to deal with the hours of labour by a Bill safeguarded by trade option ; if he had not argued aggressively against even the modest and reasonable proposal to stop the East-end sweaters from giving out home work to wretched seamstresses, and to extend the Factory Act to home workers ; if he had even hinted approval of a legal eight hours day for persons who, like the gasworkers, have got eight hours now, and only want to have it bindingly secured to them, or for persons engaged in exhausting and unhealthy toil, we should have tried to discern a ray of hope in his observations. As it is, we can only say that we see none. For the working-man at least the Gladstonian party to-day has written over its portals, 'Abandon hope, all ye who enter here.' "

It was probably because they were in the same state of hopelessness that the leaders of the Labour party resolved to contest several Liberal seats at the General Election of 1892, and to make the Eight Hours Question a test question for candidates in many uncontested constituencies. The success which attended their efforts, and the wrath of the Liberals at their tactics, are the surest proofs of the progress that the Eight Hours Movement has at length made in this country.

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER II.

### THE DEPUTATION TO MR. GLADSTONE (1892).

ON Friday, June 17th, Mr. Gladstone received at 1, Carlton Gardens, a deputation from the London Trades Council, who desired to seek his support in favour of a legal limitation of the hours of labour. Among those present were Mr. George Shipton (secretary of the London Trades Council), Mr. George Bateman (compositor), Mr. B. Cooper, L.C.C. (cigar-maker), Mr. J. Gregory (stonemason), Mr. John Rae (gasworker), Mr. W. G. Pearson (dockworker), Mr. J. Macdonald (tailor), Mr. W. C. Steadman (barge builder), Ald. H. R. Taylor, L.C.C. (bricklayer), and Mr. W. R. Taylor (litho artist), and among those with Mr. Gladstone were Sir Algernon West, Mr. Herbert Gladstone, M.P., and Mr. Spencer Lyttelton.

Mr. SHIPTON, in introducing the deputation, said that although small in numbers, they were very largely representative. The subject had been before a full delegate meeting of the London Trades Council, which represented directly just over 70,000 *bond-fide* workers. They were very strict as to the character of their representatives. A man could not be a delegate of his trade unless he had himself worked at the trade, and unless he represented actual workers. But outside the limits of the Trades Council, the deputation also claimed to represent the general feeling of workmen throughout the country, inasmuch as every organized body whose opinions could be ascertained had spoken out very clearly and strongly upon the necessity of a general reduction of the hours of labour. They recognized that there was some division of opinion as to the methods by which such reduction should be brought about, but there was no dissent from the general demand for a reduction.

Mr. GLADSTONE : A reduction by law ?

## THE DEPUTATION TO MR. GLADSTONE. 47

Mr. SHIPTON : Yes, we see no other way than a reduction by law of some kind or another.

Mr. GLADSTONE : You think the opinion of the labouring classes is unanimous in favour of a legal reduction of the hours of labour ?

Mr. SHIPTON replied that in one or two ways there was a general desire that legislative interference should take place to prevent the inordinate number of hours now worked in many trades, and to give employment to those who had to spend a great deal of time in idleness, through the want of some general arrangement. In consequence of the application of science to industrial productions, and the division and subdivision of branches, and the extended use of machinery, there was a larger amount of labour displaced. One consequence was that there was a greater demand from the unemployed upon the trades union funds which were available for their assistance. They trusted that in coming to Mr. Gladstone, his great abilities and the great power which he properly exercised over his fellow-countrymen might be turned towards assisting them to mitigate what was one of the most sorrowful pictures ever presented in our social life—that of many thousands of men willing and able to work, but unable to earn a livelihood by obtaining employment. Mr. Shipton then referred to the resolutions on the subject passed by the Trades Union Congress at Newcastle, and to the more recent demonstration at Hyde Park, where, he said, at least three-quarters of a million of people were present at the time, when the resolutions were passed without dissent.

Mr. GLADSTONE : You estimate them at three-quarters of a million ?

Mr. SHIPTON : Yes, there must have been at least that number of people gathered at the sixteen platforms, and there was a speech delivered from each.

Mr. GLADSTONE : But three-quarters of a million could not possibly hear the sixteen speeches.

Mr. SHIPTON said he had been accustomed for twenty years to organizing and taking part in such demonstrations, and he could tell that there was no large dissentient element. It would have been very soon discovered.

Mr. GLADSTONE remarked that he had thought the estimate was a bold one. With reference to a suggestion that the proceedings should be of a conversational nature, Mr. Gladstone said that certainly was his desire, as it enabled them to get further into the interior of the question, and he thought that, after all, the utility of such meetings was not that those who were honoured by receiving a deputation should say the

things that they considered the most agreeable, for that was far from his purpose, but it was that they should endeavour to get at each other's minds on the subject.

Mr. STEADMAN: Would the right hon. gentleman give us his opinion of the resolutions passed at Hyde Park with reference to an international eight hours day?

Mr. GLADSTONE: It is a very large question, sir.

Mr. STEADMAN said the present Government had sent a representative to take part in the Conference at Berlin on the question.

Mr. GLADSTONE understood that the English delegates were excluded from taking part in the resolutions on the hours of labour.

Mr. PEARSON said there was a vague idea that politicians had not generally given much attention to this particular question, and if they had a little light as to what Mr. Gladstone's views were they could better conduct their arguments.

Mr. GLADSTONE said that it was perhaps natural that the nation should suppose that there was space enough in the mind of every public man and force enough in his brain to enable him to give to every question the consideration it deserved, but that was not his opinion. It was a fundamental error, and he was not disposed to cover deficiencies by using vague language or expressing superficial ideas. He did not regard their question as a small one, or their desire as frivolous, but they must not forget that, after all, the time, strength, and brain force of all men were limited.

Mr. COOPER said he had observed it calculated in America that the introduction of machinery had increased fivefold the power of labour, but the working-men were dissatisfied because of a consciousness that they did not participate at all in the advantages.

Mr. GLADSTONE asked if they had ever happened to see that matter put in another shape, namely the fact that the steam power in this country alone was equal to the manual power of the whole human race throughout the world.

Mr. COOPER stated that the result had been a production much above the consuming or purchasing power of the people, so that larger numbers were left unemployed. He thought they were right in desiring that Parliament should intervene and help them to get reduced hours of labour by an intellectual and legal process rather than by the barbarous process of strikes.

Mr. GLADSTONE: Well, gentlemen, you are making an appeal to me with regard to my public duty, and I should like to ask whether you

are of opinion that I should set aside in favour of your question the issue—the very important issue—which I dare say you know I have especially engaged in for some time past and which has led me to do that which no man has ever done before in his eighty-third year. Do you think that I should be acting wisely or rightly if I endeavoured to take up your question with the effect of setting aside those other questions to which I am pledged in the face of the world? I do not think you intend to suggest that.

A DELEGATE said the question for them was how they were best to get the necessities of their case taken up in legislation. The Eight Hours Question really embraced the Irish people, the workers of Ireland as well as those of England and Scotland.

Mr. GLADSTONE said that did not answer his question. He assumed they were well aware of the position which had been taken up by himself and his friends, that on grounds of public utility, duty, honour, and character he must face the settlement of the great constitutional question which had been raised between Great Britain and Ireland. That constituted their first duty, and not on account of Ireland alone, but because without the settlement of that question it was quite impossible, as had been proved by the experience of his life, for Parliament to do its duty to Great Britain, and to make proper progress with the British questions. That was the position he had taken up, and he did not imagine that they would say it was his duty to recede from that position.

Mr. TAYLOR: Are we to understand that until the Irish question is disposed of to the satisfaction of the Irish people, all questions and measures with regard to the improvement of the working-classes are to stand on one side?

Mr. GLADSTONE: Oh no, I have not said that.

Mr. PEARSON: What is your own position on this question, or what would it be if we were to say that the policy of eight hours a day demands first attention, even before Home Rule?

Mr. GLADSTONE: I would say if you are satisfied on that point I should sincerely wish you success, but don't look to me, for I am so bound in honour and character to the Irish question, that I should really disgrace myself to the lowest position that the most unprincipled could possibly sink to if I were to recede from the position to which I am bound by the struggle of the last few years.

Mr. PEARSON said that new developments in public life often required change of action, and if Mr. Gladstone could be shown that the

whole nation would be more benefited by an Eight Hours Bill than by Home Rule, would he not practically recognize the fact?

Mr. GLADSTONE: The position is entirely unchangeable. If you could produce what is a large supposition, and demonstrate that view, I should say that I heartily wish you success, but I am not the instrument by which your purpose can take effect, for I should be disgraced if I abandoned the great question to which I have devoted weeks and months in endeavouring to stimulate the country.

Mr. PEARSON: Home Rule is not an end in itself.

Mr. GLADSTONE: That does not touch the point. What are you arguing for? The question whether Home Rule is an end or an instrument has nothing to do with the consideration that I am so pledged to Home Rule that I cannot recede from it.

Mr. PEARSON: Your position in the matter has a certain distinct relation to the nation. Could you not reconsider your position if we could show that an Eight Hours Bill had a more direct bearing on the national welfare?

Mr. GLADSTONE: My reconsidering my position would be useless. Can you, as a practical man, consider my position, and say I should be justified in telling the people that I have been entirely wrong, and that there is another subject which they must enter upon, and that they must throw over all I have said?

Mr. TAYLOR: Would it be necessary to throw over the other in favour of an Eight Hours Bill? We don't expect you to do that.

Mr. GLADSTONE: But I mean in the sense of leaving it behind.

Mr. TAYLOR: Could the two not be combined?

Mr. GLADSTONE: Oh, yes, possibly, in a certain order of time, but that is another question, and I am under distinct obligations and pledges.

Mr. BATEMAN: It seems to me that the question of the time and order of events must necessarily come after the settlement of the question whether the demand is right.

Mr. TAYLOR: Our meaning is that we are anxious to use your strong personality in order to advance the progress of an Eight Hours Bill, and if you are returned to make it your duty to pass that into law.

Mr. GLADSTONE: That is not in the least degree the question I put. You are asking me, and most legitimately, to assist you in this question, and I ask you in what order, in your opinion, should I proceed. Is it, in your opinion, my first duty to the country and the industrial classes to take up this question?

Mr. RAE said that some legislation was necessary in order to protect those workmen who had already obtained an eight hours day, and he mentioned the case of the gasworkers, who, he said, had found it necessary to spend about £14,000 in order to hold their own. That was a matter affecting 40,000 *bona-fide* trade representatives, whose delegate he was, and he was opposed to strikes. He was sure, if Mr. Gladstone took up the Eight Hours Question, coupled with Home Rule, it would be the means of not alone satisfying the demands of Ireland, but also the demands of the working-classes generally.

Mr. GLADSTONE said he thought he understood now that they did not put forward their demand as imposing upon him the duty to recede from the position he had taken with regard to the political question now immediately at issue. Their desire was that this question should be put into his plans, but he must tell them that he had always thought it to be his first duty to the industrial classes to put them in a position, so far as he was able, to use their own legitimate power according to their consciences and convictions for the advancement of the objects which they thought most important. Therefore, apart from such questions as Free Trade, and an open market for the goods of the people, his desire was to perfect the instrument which gave power to the bulk of the nation. That instrument was the franchise—the franchise protected by secret vote, and made thoroughly efficient by good registration laws, and by some other changes that were as yet incomplete. A good deal still, no doubt, remained to be done in conjunction with that duty. He had mentioned at Newcastle many of those points. He was very far from regretting that they had raised this discussion, not only in that room, but in the country. He was very glad of it. If they had set about that question thirty years ago, they knew very well how different would have been the circumstances. Their meetings, discussions, and demonstrations he regarded as extremely useful, but of course they must recognize that there were difficulties in their way. He was not quite certain, for instance, as to whether they were as near unanimity as Mr. Shipton had suggested with regard to the mode of shortening the hours of labour. There were two sets of views, which were probably represented by the writers of a couple of letters which had been sent to him. One of these gentlemen was a Mr. Edson, who wrote that he belonged to the Amalgamated Society of House Decorators and Painters, and who called attention to the fact that when a vote was last taken on the subject through that society there were 158 for a legal eight hours day and 354 against it.

Mr. SHIPTON : That is perfectly true. That was the difference of opinion that I referred to in my earlier remarks.

Mr. GLADSTONE was about to quote from a letter written by a Mr. Pearson on behalf of the East End drivers, conductors, and horsekeepers in the employment of the General Omnibus Company, but did not press it, upon being assured by the deputation that the writer was not fully authorized to represent all those engaged in that industry. Mr. Gladstone then asked whether the deputation considered that, under legally restricted hours of labour, the employer was to continue to make the same profits ?

Mr. SHIPTON : We think that the question would find its level. He might even make more profit with the shorter hours.

Mr. GLADSTONE : Because of the greater efficiency of the labour ?

Mr. SHIPTON : Certainly.

Mr. GLADSTONE : But is the efficiency of labour to make eight hours do the work of ten ?

Mr. SHIPTON : It may not in all cases.

Mr. GLADSTONE : My point is, Will the employer have the same amount of inducement to employ that he now has ? So far as I understand, you don't think that the eight hours of labour, speaking broadly, would produce as much as say ten hours. Now then, if employers are not to make the same profit, how are they to continue to give the same employment ? Would not the diminution of profits entail the diminution of employment ?

Mr. GREGORY said the wages under the eight hours system would be more evenly distributed, and personally he would prefer to have a slightly smaller wage in order that more might be employed and have regular pay.

Mr. GLADSTONE : Your answer rather contemplates the reduction of wages on the part of those now employed.

Mr. GREGORY : Of course we cannot regulate the methods of production, nor can we increase the actual wages paid, but we are anxious, even supposing the aggregate wages should remain the same, that the amount should be divided amongst all the applicants for work.

Mr. GLADSTONE : Supposing the aggregate wages to remain the same.

A DELEGATE : We don't say that would be the result, but if it were, we would stand by it.

Mr. TAYLOR said that whilst a number of men were working excessive hours at present, others in consequence could get no work at all.

Mr. GLADSTONE: How long has the increasing demands upon your unemployed funds been going on?

Mr. SHIPTON: More rapidly during the last five years, but during the last ten years it has been increasing.

Mr. GLADSTONE: The effect of reduced hours on the question of wages will have to be studied, and I think good will come out of such discussions, whether the more sanguine or the less sanguine view prevails—the more sanguine view which supposes that an Eight Hours Bill can be passed, and the less sanguine view of those who, though they do not yet see their way to such a measure, will yet promote a general movement in that direction. You have two methods of proceeding. One is an Act of Parliament absolutely imposing a limit of eight hours; the other an Act imposing the limit optionally; and in a very able pamphlet by a Mr. Mather, M.P., there was a third, in which he proposed that those who required the eight hours system should be entitled to call for it instead of voting themselves out of it.

Mr. BATEMAN mentioned the case of the Albion Mills, at Middleton, where an increase in the dividends had resulted from the reduction of the hours of labour, and said that such a reduction would also enable some mills to work a double shift.

Mr. TAYLOR said that in the *Economist* of January, 1891, the average dividend of eighty-five cotton-spinning companies was put at  $7\frac{1}{4}$  per cent.

Mr. GLADSTONE: But that is not a very great profit, is it, in trade allowing for the inequalities of time?

Mr. PEARSON suggested that the reduction of  $\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. in the railway dividends would enable railway companies to give their work-people the benefit of shorter hours.

Mr. GLADSTONE said the case of the railway companies was somewhat remarkable, and he did not believe that there was any case in history in which so large an investment of capital had taken place with so small a return. He believed that the total return did not much exceed 4 per cent.

Mr. PEARSON: I believe it is  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

Mr. GLADSTONE said it was pretty clear, however, that progress was being made in that direction by railway companies, as was indicated by a recent report of a Committee on the subject. They had recently waited on Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour, and they had made some general observations to the deputation about the effect of the eight hours on wages, and the ultimate effect on the labouring classes. Did

the observations of Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour appear to them to carry any weight?

Mr. BATEMAN: It looked as if they had not thought it out at all.

Mr. PEARSON: They only raised the stock difficulties.

Mr. GLADSTONE: If you could have a universal eight hours day imposed you would make the law comparatively simple, but I rather gather that you are inclined to think there are trades in which that limit could hardly be imposed. How, for instance, could you impose it upon sempstresses?

Mr. TAYLOR: The law should prevent them working in their own homes, and require the work to be done on the employer's premises.

Mr. GLADSTONE: How would you prevent that?

Mr. BATEMAN: An enactment might absolutely forbid work to be done in their own homes, where some of them now work excessive hours for some three or four shillings a week.

Mr. GLADSTONE: You would prevent the sempstresses taking their work home, and so prevent them earning that three or four shillings a week? Are you not startled at the extreme length of such an interference with private liberty?

Mr. SHIPTON: Our council has not discussed that, and we have no conclusion upon that point on record.

Mr. GLADSTONE: The strength of the working-classes lies, I maintain, in sticking to the principle of liberty.

Mr. BATEMAN: But it is not liberty to permit a poor woman to commit suicide.

Mr. GLADSTONE: That is not quite an answer to my question, which rather is, Are you prepared to prevent these girls doing work in their own homes?

Mr. RAE: I am, personally.

Mr. BATEMAN said he believed the sempstresses themselves would like it.

Mr. GLADSTONE: What? They would like to be prohibited from earning even three or four shillings a week?

Mr. BATEMAN: No, they would like to be saved the necessity of working at home, and allowed to work on their employer's premises.

Mr. GLADSTONE: Oh, yes. I can understand that the sempstresses would say, "If you pass a law to secure me employment, I am content to have my employment at home prohibited."

Mr. BATEMAN: Employers do not give out the work from philan-

thropic reasons, but because they want the work done, and if it could not be done at home they would require to provide workshops.

Mr. TAYLOR said the boot and shoe finishers and riveters had already compelled their employers to provide workshops to replace home work.

Mr. GLADSTONE: I am glad of it, but that is by the free action of opinion. How are the sempstresses to be organized for the purpose of expressing opinion?

Mr. PEARSON: They would have to organize and decide for themselves.

Mr. GLADSTONE: But if you have scores of thousands of poor persons, without organization, dispersed all over the country, how are they, as a body, to give an opinion on the subject?

Mr. TAYLOR: In the same manner as the match-girls did with regard to Mr. Lowe's Budget.

Mr. GLADSTONE expressed his doubts whether that settlement was arrived at in the most satisfactory way, and pointed out in addition that that was the case of a restricted industry confined mainly to one locality. It was a very difficult thing to impress the House of Commons with outside opinion and to seek an enactment carrying legal consequences. He would like to know which of the three methods he had suggested they would prefer—an absolute eight hours day, a Bill with the option of exemption, or a Bill with the option of inclusion.

Mr. RAE: We should prefer the middle course.

A DELEGATE: Yes, certainly the second.

Mr. GLADSTONE: Then the majority of a trade are to impose legal consequences of which the courts of law are to take notice. How are you to know who are the majority?

Mr. TAYLOR: The majority of the organized trades.

Mr. GLADSTONE: But this is to apply to all trades. Do you mean that a voluntary organization of the character of a trades union is to involve others in legal consequences? If so the organization of the trade must itself become a matter of law and of legal authority. You have told me that you represent about 70,000 workers, but can you tell me what is the total number of workers in all your various employments?

Mr. SHIPTON: It is impossible to say.

Mr. GLADSTONE: Are you prepared to say that Parliament can commit the non-organized trades, and make them bound by the majority in the organized trades?

A DELEGATE: Yes.

Mr. GLADSTONE: Do you think that the 70,000 whom you represent constitute a majority of the whole of your trades?

Mr. SHIPTON explained that in any question deeply concerning the whole trade the organized workers were the medium of communication with the remainder of their comrades. The organized trades would probably form an aggregate of two and a half millions, which was, of course, a minority of the whole eleven millions of workers throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. GLADSTONE: Is that representation of the numbers generally accepted?

Mr. BATEMAN: I do not accept the eleven millions.

Mr. GLADSTONE: It would be a great assistance to me if you could tell me, either now or afterwards, what you think is the whole number of adult workers, and what proportions are organized and not organized.

Mr. PEARSON: That would be the duty of an efficient Labour Bureau.

Mr. STEADMAN said he thought the figures quoted by an experienced representative like Mr. Shipton might, on the whole, be fairly accepted.

Mr. GLADSTONE said he did not doubt that with existing arrangements they could get at the opinions of their trades to a very large extent, and, perhaps, to a satisfactory extent, for the purpose of every description of voluntary arrangement, but the moment they came to say that the opinion of the majority of a trade should carry with it legal consequences, and inclusion or exclusion from a certain law, then they must have a legal organization and legal definitions of their membership.

Mr. PEARSON said he thought that that difficulty might be overcome by an efficient Labour Bureau.

Mr. GLADSTONE said his desire was to get to close quarters with the particulars of this subject, and he was not at all satisfied with the answer about a Labour Bureau, because that was merely saying that they could not themselves cope with the difficulty. He was not denying that the thing he suggested could be done, but he wanted to know whether they recognized that it would have to be done and were willing that it should be done. No doubt they could organize a trade as they could a constituency. He remembered that when the National Liberal Club was opened an address was presented by the workmen employed in erecting the Métropole Hotel. That address represented 550 of them, and 310 signed it, which was very satisfactory for the purpose in view, but if legal consequences had been involved it would have been

necessary to have had a strict legal definition, and the conditions must be known to the law and fixed by the law or fixed by an authority appointed by law.

Mr. BATEMAN asked if that condition was not fulfilled with regard to Trades Unions by the requirement that their regulations should be approved by the Registrar.

Mr. GLADSTONE said that was so only to a very limited extent, and if the law was to be contingent on the opinion of a majority of a trade, that majority would have to be fixed just as the majority in a constituency was fixed, and that was a consideration of great practical importance. With regard to the industrial classes of this country, the more respect they showed to personal liberty the better. He repeated that his duty to the industrial classes had been to help to put them in possession of the franchise, and in various ways to enable them to use that franchise with full efficiency. This was a self-governing country, and the first duty incumbent upon politicians was to enable people to govern themselves.

Mr. PEARSON: How far do you think our proposal is practicable, sir?

Mr. GLADSTONE: You mustn't ask me. It is a very serious thing for a man in my position to say that I think anything practicable at all. The moment I say that, people will say, "Then why don't you propose it?"

Mr. PEARSON: That is exactly what we do say.

Mr. GLADSTONE: Don't you think my hands are full enough?

Mr. PEARSON: But perhaps you might drop something less important.

Mr. GLADSTONE: But it would be a little difficult to say what could be dropped. If you are satisfied that this Eight Hours Question ought to take precedence of all others, I say heartily, "God speed you," but you must look to some man who is of less age than I am for your purpose.

Mr. GREGORY: You are prepared, I suppose, to admit that the liberties we now enjoy have been obtained to a certain extent by means of coercion upon those who might otherwise have withheld them from us?

Mr. GLADSTONE: Coercion of opinion—pressure rather. You are not quite doing yourself justice in using the word "coercion," I think. I am not afraid of that kind of pressure, with this limitation, that when it exceeds what the law allows it must be checked. I think it is a great weapon which Nature and God Almighty has placed in the hands

of the industrial classes, in that being individually less strong from circumstances than the wealthier and more powerful classes; they may by its means endeavour to make up for that by stronger sympathy and closer bonds of opinion among themselves.

Mr. GREGORY: What do you think about our *prima facie* case in favour of the Legislature taking this matter up?

Mr. GLADSTONE: The Legislature has been taking it up in a multitude of forms for a long time. The only question is whether your large object can be obtained legislatively, and I cannot decide that at once. Surely I should be out of my senses if I were to say that I could settle such a question without large consultation.

Mr. PEARSON asked whether he thought there was any difficulty about applying it in the case of the workpeople of the Government.

Mr. GLADSTONE said he doubted much whether that was the best end of the subject to approach, because the Government, as an employer, was always more or less in a false position. His own duty was to stand for the public at large. One of the greatest difficulties of public life was to find men to stand for the public. Special interests were easily represented, and flattering language might be used, but it was necessary to stand for the pecuniary interests of the public.

Mr. SHIPTON: Will you allow me to convey the grateful thanks of my colleagues to you for the patient attention you have given to our observations? We had hoped that you might be able, if not this afternoon, at least before the election, to say some encouraging words to us. We believe that if you did that it would be doing something on the road towards bringing about a settlement of the great object of your life—Home Rule for Ireland. The issue of the approaching election will depend upon the majority of one side or other, and if you were to say something of an encouraging character before the election takes place, my belief is that you would have a larger number of votes than otherwise. I don't press you for an answer now. You have explained your position—a position you are, of course, justified in taking. But we thank you, sir, for the large amount of valuable time you have kindly given to us.

Mr. GLADSTONE: It is fair that I should say that, in my opinion, one of the very highest duties of all politicians, under all circumstances, and at all cost, is to eschew and to repudiate the raising of any expectations except what they know they can fulfil. Therefore I can say nothing more. I appeal to my life—I appeal to what I have hitherto viewed as my duty to the industrial classes, putting them in the position

of standing up for their own rights, and I say that what little future I have you must judge of by the past. Until I see my way and know how things are to be done, and under what conditions, I must not excite any expectations, even if I believed that I could fulfil them, even if I bent to the hope that I could fulfil them.

Mr. SHIPTON: That is a very conscientious and honourable position for you to take up, and we thank you, sir, sincerely.

The interview then concluded.

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#### THE TRADE UNION CONGRESS OF 1892.

As this Congress has been held while our book was in the press, we can only summarize its conclusions briefly in a note.

A resolution was moved by Mr. MAWDSLEY in support of an optional eight hours day. Mr. ARNOLD (London) moved as an amendment that no trade should work more than eight hours a day, unless the organized members of it should agree to be exempted from the provisions of the Eight Hours Bill. The representatives of the Durham miners strongly urged the benefits of individual efforts.

Mr. HARVEY (Derbyshire), representing the Miners' Federation, which he said was the largest body of miners in the world, strongly advocated the amendment, which, he said, was a much simpler method of obtaining an eight hours day.

On a decision being taken the amendment was carried by 205 to 155, and becoming the substantive motion, was carried unanimously, the miners being excepted from the scope of the resolution.

Thus the Congress at Glasgow was in favour of a Bill securing an eight hours day for all trades and occupations (miners excepted); but the Bill is to contain a clause enabling the organized members of any trade who protest by ballot against the same, to exempt such trade from its provisions. Subsequently the question as it affected miners was considered, and the Parliamentary Committee was instructed to assist the miners in passing their Eight Hours Bill; an amendment proposing to leave this boon to be obtained by Trades Union effort being defeated by 281 to 56. It is creditable to the good sense of the delegates that they recognized the practical impossibility of a universal compulsory eight hours a day limit.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE EIGHT HOURS DAY IN AUSTRALIA.

[H. DE B. G.]

Origin of the Movement in Australia—Legislative and other Action—The Eight Hours in Victoria—General Survey. Melbourne—Moral Effects—Australian Wages—Remarks on Wages—How Production is affected—How the Workman is affected.

#### § 1. *Origin of the Movement in Australia.*

HAVING traced the growth of the movement for a shorter working day in our own country, we may now with advantage look at its history and development in our Australian colonies, where, in many trades, though not in all, the eight hours day has already been realized. A consideration of the actual facts of the case in a country not too dissimilar from our own, will do much to help us in arriving at a sound conclusion upon the general economic effects of introducing a change in Great Britain.

The Eight Hours Question in Australia had a totally different origin from that in England, inasmuch as it owes its beginning not so much to the length of hours already worked, or to educational influences, as to the question of wages and prices.

It is necessary to go back to the time of the “gold fever,” in order to understand how the movement originated. The

rush for the gold-fields in 1851 had naturally raised the rate of wages to an extraordinary height. With very little trouble an ordinary day-labourer could earn the value of, or dig out for himself, a quarter of an ounce of gold, that is to say, about £1 sterling. This fact naturally raised the prices of labour in every department, for workmen and artisans simply had to leave their occupation and go to the gold-fields in order to gain a high rate of wages. As an example of the rates paid we may quote wages of masons in 1854, namely 28s. per day, and sometimes as high as 30s., while their weekly expenditure would not exceed £7 12s. 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. But as the productivity of the gold-fields decreased, and the working-classes saw that a continuance of such high wages was no longer to be looked for, they seem to have determined to use a favourable time for carrying out a clear and well-defined policy. The trade who first initiated this policy were the builders. At a time like that of which we are now speaking, the building trade was the one most exposed to fluctuations of wages, owing to the rapid increase of the population in great towns. Then the warmth of the climate of Australia, which made the work of the builder a good deal harder than it would be in England, was another influence in the direction of shortening the working day. Many of the builders, too, no doubt remembered the strike of the London building trades in 1853, when the idea of the eight hours day was first formally brought forward, although the celebrated reformer, Robert Owen, had, as long ago as 1817, put eight hours as the proper limit for a day's work. By the end of March, 1856, the agitation for an eight hours day had seized upon all branches of the building trade in Melbourne, and a regular Eight Hours League was formed. It is curious to notice that it was greatly helped by

a contractor, Mr. James Stevens, who, after experiments made in his own works, declared that his workmen did as much in eight hours as others did in ten. No serious resistance was to be feared on the part of master builders and contractors in general, for at that time the labourers were absolutely indispensable to them, and the gold-fields were still remunerative enough to attract large numbers of workmen in case wages fell to any very great extent. The agitation only lasted three weeks, and without any strike the building trades in Melbourne succeeded in obtaining the eight hours day by perfectly peaceable means on the 21st of April, 1856.

### *§ 2. Legislative and other Action.*

The agitation having thus succeeded in one town, it was only natural that it should spread to others, and before many years were over the workmen in Sydney, Adelaide, and New Zealand followed in the footsteps of their brethren of Melbourne. The movement was favoured considerably by the Victorian Government, who gave a piece of ground as a site for a Board of Trade Hall for the workmen, later on called the Trades Hall, which was opened in the year 1859. The success of the agitation was remarkable, and it can only be explained if we consider the indispensability and at the same time the scarcity of manual workers in Australia about this period. At the same time there was no great social gulf fixed between the workman and his master, and it is curious to notice that a list of the present large employers of labour in Queensland shows that the great majority of them were formerly earning their bread as manual workmen. Sir Henry Parkes, for instance, the

ex-Premier of New South Wales, came out as a young Chartist, and settled down to earn his bread by the work of his hands, and the present Premier of South Australia was originally a vegetable gardener.

But it was found insufficient to obtain an eight hours day for men only ; the question of women's and children's work had to be next decided. It was found that the competition of women, young persons and children, had a serious effect upon the rate of wages for men ; and here again we notice the difference between the motives which led to the adoption of the eight hours day in Australia, and those which led to the reduction of the hours of work in factories in England. In the old country the hours of work were reduced because it was perceived, even by those who were not employed themselves, that the conditions of work and the general state of things in the factories, workshops, and mines of England were fast becoming, not only a national disgrace, but a national danger. In Australia nothing of that kind was to be feared. The motive of the eight hours day was rather that those who were already in receipt of fair wages, and who were doing only an ordinary fair day's work, were afraid of losing what they had already gained. Consequently the Trades Council of Victoria in 1882 took the initiative in procuring a shorter working day for women and children by the foundation of the Tailoresses' Trade Union, who now have a separate meeting-house of their own, the Female Operatives' Hall. Some time before, the Victorian Government had introduced drastic measures (1874) which, however, never came into effective operation.<sup>1</sup> The Government of New Zealand also in 1881 had limited the hours of labour for children under twelve to eight, between the hours

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dr. Stephen Bauer : *Arbeiterfragen in Australasien*, p. 658, &c.

of six o'clock in the morning and eight o'clock in the evening. Three years later, in Tasmania, the most conservative of all the colonies, the hours of labour for women were reduced to ten, and even the complaints of shop-assistants were not neglected, for a law was passed providing sitting accommodation for them in the shops.

### § 3. *The Eight Hours in Victoria.*

But the most comprehensive measures have been taken within the last few years by the Victorian Government. The impossibility of protecting certain classes of workmen, owing to their working alongside of women and children, by means of Trades Union organization, and the breaking of Trades Union regulations by workers who took work home to their houses in order to gain a little more wages, had become apparent. The sweating system was developed almost as formidably as in the East End of London. The long hours worked by waiters, bakers, and those employed in similar occupations, all demanded attention. A Royal Commission was therefore appointed in 1882 in order to investigate the whole subject, and the very first result of this Commission was a reduction in the hours of bakers' assistants to ten per day. Soon after this, these workers won an eight hours day without any reduction in wages, and (it should be noted) without any increase in the price of bread. At the same time a third of the bakers who were out of employment now found occupation.

The further proceedings of this Commission, which sat for two years only, aroused a great deal of attention in the colony, and it was reported as a gratifying circumstance, that owing to its sittings the Eight Hours Movement had

already received a powerful impetus.<sup>1</sup> The Commissioners declared themselves convinced of the absolute necessity for legislative action, and in their report they made a hit at the old political economy, by declaring that "they relied upon the results of practical experience rather than on the theories of those political economists who hold that any legislative interference is a violation of the law regulating supply and demand." The Commissioners, moreover, would seem to have answered by anticipation the stock objections that are raised to the eight hours day, for they further proceeded to remark that "several witnesses considered the pressure of educated public opinion will in time achieve all that is necessary, while others maintain that nothing more can be effected by moral suasion. Your Commissioners believe that moral force is devoid of the necessary power to bring about the reform desired, and that an Act of Parliament alone can impart solidity and permanence to the Eight Hours Movement in connection with shops and similar establishments."

The Commission also reported in favour of the extension of the Factory Act of 1874 to all employments of women, and recommended various amendments to that Act, and finally, as a result of their proposals, the Factories and Workshops Acts of 1885 and 1886 were introduced, which were afterwards consolidated in the Act of 1890. The regulations of the Act in relation to young persons and women are such as to exclude them altogether from certain branches of industry, or to limit considerably their employment therein; and thereby we perceive that the policy of preventing female labour from competing with that of men was beginning to have its effect.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Eight Hours Day*, p. 41.

§ 4. *General Survey. Melbourne.*

Victoria is the most advanced of the Australian colonies upon the Eight Hours Question. In the others the eight hours day is enforced by the Trades Unions themselves in trades which are strong enough to do so, such as carpentering and building, and attempts at Parliamentary legislation have been made in the Lower Houses of the Queensland and New Zealand legislatures, but the bills were rejected by the Upper Houses. On the whole the eight hours day is by no means universal in Australia,<sup>1</sup> but it is sufficiently extended among the most important trades to enable us to form an adequate judgment of its economic and other consequences.

The following table shows the growth of the movement in Melbourne. The eight hours day was in force

In 1856 in 8 trades.		In 1884 in 29 trades.
„ 1857 „ 9 „		„ 1885 „ 34 „
„ 1859 „ 11 „		„ 1886 „ 44 „
„ 1869 „ 12 „		„ 1888 „ 48 „
„ 1879 „ 17 „		„ 1890 „ 50 „
„ 1883 „ 20 „		„ 1891 „ 60 „

that is, among more than three-fourths of the working population.<sup>2</sup>

§ 5. *Moral Effects of the Reduction.*

Of course what concerns us to observe more especially in this chapter is the general effect of the reductions in the working day upon the working-classes of Australia, in order

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the general sketch in Webb and Cox's *Eight Hours Day*, pp 38—44.

<sup>2</sup> Bauer, *Arbeiterfragen in Australasien*, p. 649.

that we may form thereby some idea of what would be the probable effect of a similar measure in England. In the first place we may notice that nearly all visitors to Australia are struck with the far higher position which the working-class occupy there than they do anywhere else. Sir Charles Dilke,<sup>1</sup> who is certainly an eminent authority, points out that they are generally prosperous; many of them have property and good houses; and that their wives often keep a servant, and therefore have leisure for their own culture. At the same time most workmen in Australia belong to some religious body, which is by no means the case in England, and it is a remarkable fact that in spite of high wages and short hours, the consumption of spirits<sup>2</sup> has greatly decreased in all the Colonies. Indeed, the active agitation of the publicans against the eight hours day proves that they did not anticipate any increase in their profits through an increase in the comforts of a labourer's life. Then again, the Australian workman visits museums, theatres, and libraries—which he considers his natural property in a far more real sense than they are the property of his fellow-workman in England, because he has time to enjoy them. And with all this comfort and leisure, his wages still remain at a remarkably high level.

#### § 6. *Australian Wages.*

The actual rates of wages paid in our Australian colonies may be most conveniently seen in the following table of some of the chief industries.

<sup>1</sup> *Problems of Greater Britain*, vol. ii. pp. 233—236.

<sup>2</sup> H. H. Hayter, in a paper read before the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science.

Employment.	N. S. Wales.	Victoria.	New Zealand.
Agricultural labourers per week ...	15s. to 20s. and food.	20s. to 25s. and food.	20s. to 30s. and food.
Shepherds, drovers, &c., per week ...	11s. 6d. to 19s. and food.	11s. 6d. to 19s. & 23s. with food.	15s. 6d. to 23s. and food.
Masons, plasterers, &c., per day ...	10s. to 12s.	10s. to 12s.	7s. to 12s.
Printers, per hour ...	1s. 3d. (Overtime. 1s. 8d.)	1s. 2d.	1s.
Ships' carpenters, per day ...	9s. 4d. to 12s. 8d.	18s.	8s. to 12s.
Dockers, per hour ...	1s. 3d.	1s.	1s.
Furniture-makers, per day ...	8s. to 10s.	9s. to 10s.	7s. to 10s.
Tailors, per hour ...	10d. to 1s. 1d.	10d.	1s.
Miners, per day, for 44 hrs. in the week	10s. 6d. to 12s. 6d. In Gold Mines 50s. a week.	8s. to 9s. In Silver Mines 60s. for 48 hours.	

The following comparative table of wages paid in the English and Australian docks in February, 1891, is also interesting.

Employment.	ENGLAND (Portsmouth). 50 hours per week.	AUSTRALIA (Sydney). 44 to 48 hours per week.
Joiners ... ...	27s.	60s.
Smiths ... ...	28s. 6d. to 33s.	50s. to 55s.
Braziers ... ...	30s. to 36s.	60s.
Ships' Carpenters ...	30s.	60s.
Labourers ... ...	16s. 6d.	45s.

In this table<sup>1</sup> the very favourable conditions which prevail in Australia for unskilled labour are clearly marked ; and that too in a colony in which neither a Protective

<sup>1</sup> From Bauer, as before.

system of trade nor stringent Factory Acts exist to influence the course of wages and prices. And if we wish to gain a clear idea of the general relations of wages to hours of work and cost of living in England and Australia, we may sum them all up briefly in Sir Charles Dilke's statement,<sup>1</sup> that employers in Australia pay 100 per cent. higher wages for 20 per cent. shorter hours of labour than in England, while prices are, on the whole, only 20 per cent. dearer. Rent is a little higher in Australia, and so is clothing, but food is far cheaper. Here again the relative cost of living in England and Australia may be shown by a short table, drawn up by Dr. Stephen Bauer. The figures show the proportionate cost of living by means of an average index number taken for ten necessities of life, namely : ham, beef, mutton, bread, butter, cheese, coffee, potatoes, sugar and tea. They are as follows—

Country.	Average number for 10 necessities.	Rent of 3 rooms per week.
New South Wales ...	14.9	10s. to 18s.
Queensland ...	14.4	7s. to 20s.
West Australia ...	14.6	7s. to 10s.
South Australia ...	11.4	6s. to 13s.
Victoria ...	9.6	5s. to 10s.
New Zealand ...	9.9	6s. to 14s.
England (London) ...	9.0	4s. to 6s.

### § 7. *Remarks on Wages.*

Of course there are not a few statisticians and others who consider that the favourable condition of the working-classes, which the preceding tables of wages and prices have illus-

<sup>1</sup> *Problems of Greater Britain*, vol. ii. p. 289.

trated, is produced by artificial and temporary causes, and that it cannot therefore be of long duration. They point to the Protective policy of most of the colonies; the Anti-Chinese and Alien Acts, which exclude foreign competition in the labour market; and some also declare that the natural increase of population is kept down by the methods of Neo-Malthusianism,<sup>1</sup> and that the labour market is thus prevented from becoming over-crowded. Others maintain that in any case the experience, say of Victoria, cannot be utilized by England because the circumstances of a new colony are entirely different from those of the old mother-country. This point was raised and aptly answered by Mr. John Rae in a most valuable and interesting article in the *Economic Journal* for March, 1891. There he points out that "whether colonial peculiarities make any difference to the initiation of the reform, they make none to its effects." They can make no difference to the relative production under an eight hours or under a ten hours system, or to the actual efficiency of labour, or to the character of the working-classes. Nor, again, can they, as we have shown (p. 83), make any difference in the rate of wages, for these depend, not on protection or Malthusianism, or the peculiarities of a new country—or, at any rate, only to a limited extent—but on the power of the workmen to produce commodities and his ability to obtain a fair share of what he produces. This being the case, we may fairly claim that Victoria has a very valuable lesson in practical experience to give to England; and we propose now to

<sup>1</sup> Mr. H. H. Hayter, the statistician to the Victorian Government, in the *Victorian Year-Book*, points to the decrease of the average family from 5·9 in 1874, to 4·23 in 1888, and asserts that this is largely due to steps taken to prevent the occurrence of maternity.

see what have actually been the effects in that colony of a shorter working day upon production, the efficiency of the workmen, and other important matters.

Before doing so, however, we may first devote a few lines to remarking that as far as can be ascertained the eight hours day has *in itself* made no reduction in the rates of wages, and that of course for the very obvious reason given above. Provided a workman turns out the same total product as before, and provided also that he can gain his fair share of it, it will make no difference whether that total product is turned out in eight hours or in nine or ten. And this has actually been the case in Australia. The wages in the building trades remained exactly the same from 1856, when the builders shortened their hours, till 1860, when they fell, owing to other causes, chief among which were an over-crowded labour market, and a fall in prices of food. The rates paid were—

Year.	Wages per day.
1856 to 1860	15s.
1860 to 1872	8s to 10s.
Since 1872	10s. to 12s.

The wages of bookbinders have neither risen nor fallen, nor have those of the coopers, since these two trades got the eight hours day in 1883. Blacksmiths gained the day in 1859, just before the general fall of wages just alluded to; and here again the Eight Hours Question had no influence on wages, for these fell just as in all other trades. They were 13s. in 1859, 11s. in 1860; remained at from 8s. to 10s. in 1863, and rose again, as did those of

all other trades, in 1872, when they were, and have since been, from 10s. to 12s. The same fact meets us in all the other trades, and establishes the proposition that a shorter working day does not, simply because it is shorter, either raise or lower wages; but that wages rise and fall owing to totally different causes. It is also made clear that a shorter day does not diminish to any large extent the number of the unemployed, but we must leave a discussion of this point to a later chapter (p. 92). It is now our business, after this digression, to see what points a shorter working day does affect.

### § 8. *How Production is affected.*

In the first place, as regards production, it may be noted that a reduction of working hours generally operates in two ways: for it puts both masters and men on their mettle. "The masters set themselves at once to practise economies of various sorts, to make more efficient arrangements of the work, to introduce better machinery or to speed the old, to try the double shift, and other expedients to maintain and even augment the production of their works. The men return to their toil in better heart after their ampler rest, re-invigorated both in nerve and muscle, and make up in the result, sometimes in part, sometimes wholly, by the intensity of their labour, for the loss of its duration. "*Victorian experience,*" concludes Mr. Rae, "*shows the recouplement almost complete.*" As examples of this he quotes the case of the Melbourne brewers, who themselves confess that they have found themselves, with an eight hours day since 1885, more prosperous than ever. And as regards the production the following figures speak for themselves—

Year.	Hands employed.	Gallons of Beer produced.
1884	860	13,723,371
1885	955	14,400,749
1888	1,063	17,828,453

In this table the increase in production is more than equal to the increase in the number of men employed. The same facts appear when we take the case of the coach-makers, saddlers, and agricultural implement-makers, while the boot-makers show a decline in the number of men employed, and consequently a slight, but not immediate, decline in the total product. In fact, it is almost a universal opinion in the colony that the men work harder now while they are at their work, and that they turn out work of a better quality, than they did under the long hours system.

And this point, as to how the men work, leads us to ask : Does the shortening of the hours improve the efficiency of the workman ? The affirmative answer is already implied in the facts quoted as to the total production, but if further testimony is required, we may quote the opinion of Mr. Duncan, an English man of business,<sup>1</sup> who states that he saw one man in Melbourne getting as much work to do in a day as would have been given to two men in this country, and that the lifts they took were more suitable to steam-power than for human beings. Then again Lord Brassey, no mean authority, in a paper read in 1888 at the Royal Colonial Institute, mentions specially "the remarkable physique" of the Australian navvy, and in the discussion which followed his paper, Admiral Tryon stated that he had spent, on behalf of the Admiralty, many thousands of

<sup>1</sup> Author of *A Journal of a Voyage to Australia*.

pounds in wages in Australia during the last few years, and that "though the wages were high the work was good, and the cost not so great as might be supposed. The men give a good day's work. It is true that they put down their tools the very instant the dinner-bell rings, but they do not dawdle and prepare for that event half an hour before." Captain W. H. Henderson, R.N., who for many years was in command of H.M.S. *Nelson* in Australian waters, gave similar testimony. "I have often had much to do with the lumpers," he said, "that is, the men who discharge cargoes, coal especially, and I have no hesitation in saying that they do their work better than in the old country, and will coal a ship three times as fast." Such evidence as this certainly goes to show very conclusively that a reduction of working hours has been compensated by an increase of efficiency in the workman; and it is pleasant, in conclusion, to quote once more Captain Henderson's testimony as to the general improvement in mental culture, as well as in physique, which has followed the shortening of work. "In the large towns there are means of public recreation and improvement which have hitherto hardly existed with us, and they are fully appreciated and made use of by the wage-earning classes. I have often watched them crowding into the parks, national galleries, and botanical gardens on Bank Holidays, and have been struck with the well-to-do appearance of their wives and children, with their quiet and orderly demeanour and behaviour, and apparent content with their lot."

#### § 9. *How the Workman is affected.*

Indeed, it is the general opinion in Victoria that the habits of the working-man have been improved rather than

deteriorated by the reduction of hours. By leaving his work early in the afternoon a man can easily manage to live out in the suburbs, where he generally has a cottage with a bit of garden attached to it, in which he usually spends much of his leisure time instead of in the public-house. Many of the workmen own their own cottages, and, as Mr. Rae aptly puts it, "people are fond of celebrating the social and political virtues of a peasant proprietary, but the city of Melbourne has even a better wall of security in the belt of working-class cottages by which it is encircled; and the pride of the modest owners in their little home and garden diverts them not merely from political, but from convivial temptations. The population has thus been undergoing most important changes of national character, which could not have come about at all without the longer leisure provided by the eight hours day." The magnificent Public Library of Melbourne is generally thronged with working-class visitors every Saturday afternoon; and 53 per cent. of the 2000 students of the Working Men's College are genuine artisans—which is a far higher percentage than can possibly be quoted for the attendance of working-men at the much-belauded University Extension lectures, and similar institutions in England. In fact, such intellectual as well as physical development is a necessary consequence of shortening the working day. A man cannot, unless he be a besotted idiot, spend *all* his spare time in the pot-house (as some among us do vainly talk), but feels, as he acquires time for educating his mind and strengthening his body, that there are other pleasures than those of intoxication, and higher ideals than those of the tap-room. This has been the case at any rate in Victoria. "Altogether, the more we examine the subject the more irresistibly is the impression

borne in from all sides that there is growing up in Australia, and very largely in consequence of the eight hours day, a working-class which for general *morale*, intelligence, and industrial efficiency, is probably already superior to that of any other branch of the Anglo-Saxon race, and for happiness, cheerfulness, and all-round comfort of life has never seen its equal in the world before. For all this advantage, moreover, nobody seems to be a shilling the worse.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Rae : “The Eight Hours Day in Victoria,” *Economic Journal* of March, 1891, from which much of the above is taken.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS.

[H. DE B. G.]

Why the Eight Hours Day is advocated—The Theory of Wages—Mistakes of this Theory—The True Theory of Wages—Can Wages rise? Rent—Can Wages rise? Profits—Will Production decrease?—Foreign Competition—The Efficiency of the Workman—The Unemployed—Other Views: Mr. Naylor—Mr. Rae's Conclusions—Economic Objections: Mr. Hobson—Effects on Trade.

#### § 1. *Why the Eight Hours Day is advocated.*

WE have now seen how the eight hours day works in Australia, and may very well ask ourselves the question how it would work in England. The answer can be given both from a discussion of theory and a survey of actual facts, and in this chapter we propose to clear the ground as regards theory first, looking at the subject from the point of view of the economist rather than of the advocate or the opponent. It may be well then for us to consider why the eight hours day is advocated, and what would be the probable economic results of the adoption of a legal working day of eight hours only. It has been shrewdly remarked, we believe by Professor W. S. Jevons, that the leaders of the trades unions are often right in their practical proposals,

but generally wrong in the reasons they give for these reforms. We think that without any unfairness the same may be said of the promoters of the Eight Hours Movement. The main reason given for the advocacy of this labour reform is that it would find work for the unemployed, because in order to do the same amount of work in eight hours as was formerly done in ten hours, considerably more men would have to be taken on, and thus the unemployed would be drawn into continuous employment once more. That might at first indeed be the case, but the question is: How long would such employment continue? For, unless counteracting influences of a powerful nature were brought to bear, the rate of production would be very speedily checked and wages would fall to a considerable extent. There is a very prevalent fallacy among the working-classes (though it is by no means confined to them) that the limitation of labour will raise its price, and will cause the workman to obtain a larger share of his master's profits. It cannot be too often insisted upon and demonstrated that the whole wealth of a country, employers' profits and workmen's wages alike, come out of the product of labour, and if you limit by any means the quantity of this product there will be so much less both for employer and employed to share. Without falling into the ancient fallacy of the "wages fund" of the older economists, it is perfectly evident that the stock of wealth produced by labour is at any given time a definite quantity, and that from this stock of wealth are drawn the employer's profits, the capitalist's interest, the landlord's rent, and the workman's wages; and that if the most important element in this production voluntarily produces less, there will be in the future all the less wealth from which he can draw the reward of his labour. Such

being the case, it is impossible that a mere reduction in the hours of labour can, of itself, give to the workmen a higher remuneration for that labour. It is principally then as a means of dealing with the distress in the labour world that this change is advocated. And as a corollary of this it is pointed out, with great truth, that the working-classes would have additional leisure, which would benefit them both mentally and physically. That they would have additional leisure is undoubted, and we think they would know how to use it wisely. The great advance in education and in general culture which has made itself felt of late years among the working-classes, is a most encouraging sign to those who have seen the change actually going on around them; and if the additional facilities which it is said the movement will bring are used to the extent that may reasonably be hoped, the resulting progress of intellectual development among the workers will go a long way to compensate other disadvantages. But as a third reason for the movement, it is stated that it would tend to equalize wealth, and here we are upon far less secure ground. That a certain equalization of wealth among us is desirable, few, we think, will reasonably dispute. The contrast between Dives with his £20,000 a year and Lazarus with 10s. or even 20s. a week, is not indicative of a healthy economic life in the State. But whether the desired equalization will be effected by means of a reduction in the hours in which wealth is produced is a very doubtful question.

### § 2. *The Theory of Wages.*

However, whatever may be the reasons given for the advocacy of an eight hours day, the question may safely be treated as largely an economic one, and as being in

the main a question of wages—*i. e.* a question of greater remuneration for labour and of more universal employment for those who desire to work—and it is on this ground that we propose now to consider it. Before plunging *in medias res* it is necessary first to consider the theory of wages. For even in treating a practical question such as this, in which facts and statistics are so indispensable to a proper conclusion, we must nevertheless give a due place to theory, provided always that the theory be a true one, and extracted from, and not imposed upon, the facts.

The old economic theory of wages was simple enough, and although fallacious, is by no means as yet defunct. It is generally called the theory of the “wages fund,” and the best statement of the position assumed by its inventors is, we think, contained in one McCulloch’s notes (vi.) to a passage in the *Wealth of Nations* : “That portion of the capital or wealth of a country,” he says, “which the employers of labour intend, or are willing, to pay out in the purchase of labour may be much larger at one time than at another. But whatever may be its absolute magnitude, it obviously forms the *only* source from which any portion of the wages of labour can be derived. No other fund is in existence from which the labourer, as such, can draw a single shilling ; and hence *it follows* that the average rate of wages, or the share of the national capital appropriated to the employment of labour, falling at an average to each labourer, must depend entirely upon its amount as compared with the number of those among whom it has to be divided.” In other words, the amount of the wages of labour is the quotient in a division sum, the divisor of which is the number of the working-classes, and the dividend the amount of capital in the country. The whole theory, it is

easily seen, rests upon the assumption that wages are paid out of wealth that has already been set by as capital for this very purpose.<sup>1</sup> Starting from this basis the older, and, for that matter, some of the more modern economists showed that all the capital of a country is divided into two parts: (1) auxiliary (*i. e.* that which aids in industrial production, such as machinery, mills, means of transit, and so forth), and (2) remuneratory (*i. e.* that which is devoted to the payment of wages to labour). The circumstances of a country determine in what proportion these two kinds of capital shall be divided. If much capital, for instance, is employed in the shape of mills and machinery, there will be so much the less capital to be given as the reward of labour. This theory naturally leads to the deduction, not only that wages depend upon the amount of remuneratory capital existing and the number of labourers, but also that "industry is limited by capital," which is a crude way of stating the facts of the case. The most unfortunate deduction, however, from the two propositions of the fixed wages fund and the limitation of industry by capital, was that any attempt of the working-classes to improve their position and get more of the produce of their labour was useless, futile, and indeed positively harmful. No change or attempt on their part, it was said, can increase the wages fund, unless it either increases the total amount of capital in the country, and this it is not likely to do, or unless it increases the remuneratory capital at the expense of the auxiliary, in which case industry would suffer and wages once more fall.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also Thorold Rogers' edition of *The Wealth of Nations*, vol. i. p. 363, *note*, for refutation of "Labour Fund" doctrine.

*§ 3. Mistakes of this Theory.*

Although co-operators and trades unionists have brought the unanswerable logic of facts to disprove this theory, and although it has been seen that wages have risen without causing any evil effects to capital, there are a good many people still who in one way or another cling to this theory and condemn any attempts of the working-classes to obtain higher wages. The influence of Ricardo and McCulloch is unfortunately not yet dead, and the present generation of economists has had to waste much of its time in clearing away the prejudices and mistakes of their predecessors. Mill, who at first believed in the theory, subsequently, however, was converted to a truer appreciation of the facts by the arguments of his friend Thornton. Professor Cliffe Leslie attacked it boldly, and adduced one or two very pertinent facts in support of his arguments. He pointed out that at the time of the potato famine in Ireland, when the population sank from 8,000,000 to 6,000,000, wages did not rise, although, according to the old theory, they ought to have done so, there being the same amount of capital to be divided among fewer people. Again, in new countries it is a remarkable fact that the remuneration of labour is always high, although the capital of such a country must necessarily be small. Professor Leslie's views were supported by Professor Thorold Rogers and Arnold Toynbee. And in fact it is abundantly evident that it is not true that any fixed portion of capital is set apart for the remuneration of labour. The true state of the case is that, at present and under our present industrial system, wages cannot be paid without capital, for they are often advanced, or apparently advanced, by capital. But it is not true that the amount of

an employer's capital influences the amount of wages he pays his workpeople. He really repays them out of the produce of their labour, in some cases before that produce has become a marketable commodity, but in many cases not till long afterwards.<sup>1</sup> The theory, in fact, was due largely to the special phenomena of the time of the industrial revolution (1780 onwards), when the amount of capital in the country was comparatively small, and the demand for it exceedingly large. And, finally, it looked at the wages question solely from the side of consumption and distribution.

§ 4. *The True Theory of Wages.*

Now, any adequate and true theory of wages must take account not only of the distribution and consumption of commodities, but also of their production. For, as we said above, it cannot be too clearly and too often insisted upon that wages are paid out of the continually growing product of labour, and from that alone. They may or may not be advanced by capital, but they are paid by labour. The amount of wages which the labourer receives depends—firstly, upon what Prof. F. Walker calls the “net disposable fund,” produced by industry; and secondly, upon the manner in which that produce is distributed. Perhaps it would be best not to use the word “fund” at all in speaking of wages, lest a casual reader might imagine that after all we were falling into the old “wages fund” fallacy. We will say then that wages depend upon the net amount of the produce of labour available for distribution, and upon the way in which it is distributed. Wages are that portion of the total produce of labour which the labourer can, by

<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. Cannan's *Pol. Econ.*, p. 51.

competition, custom, or otherwise, obtain for himself after the landlord, the capitalist, the employer, and the Government have got as much as they can for themselves in the shape of rent, interest, profits, and taxes respectively. Very often the labourer's portion is, after all these deductions, somewhat diminutive.

### § 5. *Can Wages Rise? Rent.*

The bearing of this discussion on wages to the question of the Eight Hours Movement becomes perfectly evident when we ask ourselves, as economists, the two questions: How will the movement, if successful, influence the amount of the net disposable product? and also, How will it affect the distribution of this product? If we can answer these two questions satisfactorily, we need not trouble ourselves further about the results of the movement. We shall be able to afford it, and may await the consequences with security. If, however, we cannot answer them favourably, we must, for the time being at any rate, refuse it our support.

It may make the discussion clearer, perhaps, if we take the second question first, and inquire how far the movement will affect the distribution of the wealth produced by labour. And in doing so it must be borne in mind that here the question is practically a question of the raising of wages, for the rate of wages for eight hours' work is to remain the same as for the labour of ten or twelve hours, and this is of course the same thing as a higher rate of present remuneration. We have seen that the wealth produced by labour is distributed in the various forms of rent, interest, profits, taxation, and wages. If wages rise, some of these items

must be encroached upon. Is this possible? At the outset we think most decidedly that it is possible, and, indeed, is very probable. In one very gigantic and remarkable case it is being done to a considerable extent, and that is in the case of Co-operation. But leaving this, we think it is putting the question very mildly to point out, and even to hope, that the item of rent may be very largely encroached upon indeed, without anybody being a penny the worse for it, except an unfortunate few who will have to learn to support existence on perhaps £5,000, or even less, per year, instead of on £10,000 or £20,000. We do not know how many people are aware of the magnitude of this one item of rent in our national accounts, but we give the figures for the benefit of those who may be curious to know them. The total rent both of houses and of farm lands amounts to the huge sum of £130,000,000 per annum, the former bringing in £70,000,000 and the latter £60,000,000. It used to be supposed among older economists that rent was a "fixed point" which it would be impious to assail. But alas! in these democratic days few things are sacred, and even rent may be attacked. Nor do we suppose that the result would be very disastrous.

Again, there is the item of interest, which it may be possible to reduce. Here we beg to state distinctly that we do not advocate any of these reductions or encroachments, but are merely considering what is possible, and indeed, from an economic point of view, extremely probable. It may be said, in answer to this suggestion, that the lowering of the rate of interest would be a deterring influence upon the accumulation of capital, and this would not be desirable. But in view of the fact that the present abnormally low rate of interest in England to-day does not seem to have any

effect in that direction, it is doubtful whether this contemplated reduction of interest would at all deter people from accumulation of capital.<sup>1</sup>

### § 6. *Can Wages Rise? Profits.*

The next item which suggests itself for the probable reductions which a raising of wages by the Eight Hours Movement would cause, is that of the profits of the employer. Here, again, recent experiments in co-operation, and especially co-operative production, have shown that this is possible. The instances of the late M. Godin's manufactory at Guise, and of the Hebden Bridge Co-operative Fustian Manufacturing Company in Yorkshire, are cases in point, to which it is impossible now to do more than refer generally. But it has been ingeniously remarked that to reduce employers' profits would, though possible, hardly be wise, because it is above all things necessary that our "captains of industry" should be men of the highest ability and mental power, and it is very doubtful whether such men would engage in the occupation of employers of labour unless high prizes, in the shape of high profits, attracted them to this position. It certainly is a practical difficulty in the case of co-operative production that men of marked business ability prefer to take the chances, and with them the risks, of obtaining higher profits in a business of their own than to occupy the position of a paid manager of a "productive" enterprise at a fixed salary. But we certainly doubt whether the reduction of profits which presumably would be caused by higher wages would be so great as to deter men of ability from becoming manufacturers and merchants. There is, however, another important point

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also E. Cannan's *Pol. Econ.*, p. 108.

that should not be overlooked in this connection, which is, that if the employers felt that their profits were being cut down they would most probably begin in their turn to trench upon the profits of the middlemen, and would certainly suck thereout no small advantage, besides very likely benefiting the community of producers and consumers at large. This is really the most probable result of the cutting down of the profits of the employer, and few would think in that case that much harm was being done.

The result, then, of our consideration as to whether the raising of wages induced by the Eight Hours Movement would affect the distribution of the wealth produced by labour, is that it probably would do so, and that in certain cases the effects would not by any means be disastrous. We now turn to the other question which presents itself forcibly to our notice: Will the movement increase or decrease the net amount of wealth produced by, and disposable for, labour? The answer is not to be given easily or lightly.

### *§ 7. Will Production Decrease?*

It is of course obvious that, supposing the present rate of production to be the same after the movement has succeeded, it will not be possible to produce as much wealth in eight hours as in ten or more. To keep production up at the present rate with diminished hours of labour, it will be necessary to resort to further means of doing as much as possible in a shorter space of time. That it will be possible to do this we may conclude upon a consideration of similar reductions in the hours of labour in the past. There is certainly considerably more wealth produced in our manufactories to-day than there was at the beginning,

or even at the middle, of the century. Yet the hours of labour have been reduced far more sweepingly than it is proposed to reduce them now. At the beginning of the century young persons and little children were worked in the factories sixteen or even eighteen hours a day as a regular thing ; occasionally more. Those who have studied the history of the Factory Acts are simply aghast at the fearful conditions of labour therein disclosed,<sup>1</sup> and at the same time amazed at the endurance of which the workers of that day were capable. The penalty has been paid by their descendants, as those who live in the factory districts can testify. It was a far more violent step to reduce these long hours to ten per day than now to reduce the day from ten hours to eight. Yet production has not suffered. The reason is that necessity, here as always, showed herself to be literally the mother of invention, and the decrease of hours was amply compensated by an increase of new machinery, appliances, and devices which have brought the development of the manufacturing industries up to the present point. Some fear that we have gone as far in our inventions as it is possible for us to go, and that if we were to reduce the hours of labour now we could no longer compensate by increased facilities of production. But we can hardly believe that this is the case. To take but one example : The steam-engine alone is as yet practically in its infancy, and one can hardly believe that there is no room for further invention when we remember that only ten per cent. of the power generated by coal in the steam-engine is utilized, while the remaining ninety per cent. is wasted. There might, indeed, be a temporary decrease in production, but it is almost certain that there would be sufficient stimulus

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Industrial History of England*, pp. 178—186 (Gibbins).

of invention to meet the difficulty. It is astonishing how invention is called out or repressed by favourable or unfavourable circumstances. We are told that English inventiveness is largely due to free trade, while in Germany the effects of technical education are neutralized by the lack of invention caused by the fostering care of protection. On this point we should not like, however, to express a decided opinion.

#### § 8. *Foreign Competition.*

The next great difficulty to be faced by the advocates of an eight hours day is that of foreign competition. It is asserted, apparently with some show of reason, that the proposed reduction would make it impossible for English employers, with men working only eight hours, to compete against foreign manufacturers whose employés work twelve, or even more, hours per day, and often on seven days of the week. This argument has been used before, at the time of the Factory Act agitation, and it cannot be said that it is, in view of the history of that and the present period, entirely successful. It is true that foreign competition must be considered, but whether it is the bogey that some would have us believe, we are inclined to doubt.<sup>1</sup> In spite of all we hear on this head, workmen's wages are better than they were forty years ago, and we do not think that employers

<sup>1</sup> Mulhall's *Statistical Dictionary* informs us that Great Britain, with a population of 36,000,000, produces wealth to the amount of £1,247,000,000 per annum; France, with 37,500,000 population, produces £965,000,000; Germany, with 45,000,000 population, produces £850,000,000; Russia, with 80,000,000 population, produces £760,000,000; and Austria, with 38,000,000 population, produces £602,000,000. England, with the smallest population and shorter hours of work than prevail abroad, produces by far the most wealth.

are any worse off. And the fact that his Continental brother chooses to submit to long hours and degraded conditions of labour is certainly no reason why the English workman should also submit to the same yoke. It is a question, too, how long the Continental workman will consent to live and work as he does. There are many signs that the present state of things will not continue to exist much longer (see p. 131), nor is it desirable that they should. The English workman has already felt the benefit of shorter hours of labour than he was formerly accustomed to, and can produce better work than his Continental rivals, even when working the same machinery for a shorter time.<sup>1</sup> This statement was made by the late Sir Jacob Behrens, a high commercial authority, in the evidence he gave before the Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade in 1885.

### § 9. *The Efficiency of the Workman.*

This question of shorter hours producing better work leads us to another aspect of the case. Might not the workman, by working only eight hours a day, and having more leisure for educational or physical improvement, become so much more efficient that the gain here obtained would amply compensate for the fact that he was working a shorter time? Would not the gain in the quality of the work make up for the acknowledged loss in quantity? Of course, we may say in answer, this is possible, but whether the effect of the improved quality of the work would be felt before considerable loss has been inflicted on industry is a very grave question. For what guarantee is there that the emancipated workman would devote the two hours he had gained to a course, let us suppose, of technical education,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 120.

or to a study of the present industrial system? We firmly believe that some of the most ardent advocates of the movement would do so, but we could hardly say as much for the rank and file of the working-classes, at any rate as yet. But still this argument of increased efficiency in shorter time is by no means to be lightly disposed of, though we must confess that any results in this direction would be comparatively slow in coming. But it is certainly probable that, eventually at any rate, production would not greatly suffer (cf. p. 140).

Indeed, when we take a careful summary of the points which have come under our notice in trying to give an answer to the second of our two questions, it may be admitted that it does not appear on the whole that a reduction of the hours of labour to eight per day would seriously influence production, after the first natural shock and temporary loss that would be inflicted upon industry, before either the employers or the workmen had time to adjust themselves to the new state of things, and to compensate for the reduction in some other way. At the same time, the loss and shock here referred to might be much greater than is anticipated, and would inevitably be complicated by other industrial phenomena which could not now be foreseen. There is one of these phenomena, however, which we can foresee, and which must be taken into account as being fraught with no small difficulty.

#### § 10. *The Unemployed.*

We come, in fact, once more to the ever-recurring problem of the unemployed in a new shape. It is one of the claims of the advocates of the movement we are

discussing, to which we have alluded above, that the eight hours day would result in a permanent relief of the distress now prevalent, because, of course, in order to keep up production at its present rate with the eight hours limitation, considerably more hands would have to be employed than can at present find work. We are not at all sure of the efficacy of the reform as a relief for present distress, but granted that there would be suddenly created a large demand for what is now surplus labour, we should find that the employment of this labour is almost sure to have a far from salutary effect upon production. We should have, in many cases, though we do not say in all, the places of skilled workmen taken, or at least supplemented, by unskilled labourers. Mr. W. Abrahams, M.P., has calculated that there would be an immediate demand for something like 750,000 additional workers to keep up production at its present rate ; "and you must remember," he said to the delegates at the Trades Union Congress, "that the moment this large army, now enforced into idleness, once get work to do, there would be more consumers as well as producers." This is quite true ; and the unemployed might be quite satisfactory as consumers, but would they be equally satisfactory in the capacity of producers of wealth ? We must remember that comparatively few of them are skilled workmen, for there is still sufficient demand for skilled labour to prevent many such workers being idle. The majority are men who are out of work because they cannot adapt themselves—often through no fault of their own—to the only kinds of labour which happen to be open to them, and because they have no special skill to help them in the battle of industry. They are unfortunate, and we heartily sympathize with them. But it is no use dis-

guising the fact that the importation of so much unskilled labour, quite suddenly, into skilled trades, may have a very disastrous effect in checking production in the very beginning of the movement, and thus diminish the net disposable amount of wealth to be shared by the workers. We do not say this is a difficulty which is to be considered insuperable, but it is certainly one which ought to make us very careful before committing ourselves unreservedly to the movement.

§ 11. *Other Views. Mr. Naylor.*

But now let us ask ourselves the question, If the eight hours day can be afforded in Australia, can it be afforded in England? Mr. John Rae has already informed us that, to use his own words, nobody was a shilling the worse for it, and, it might be added, from the pecuniary point of view, no one was a shilling the better. But of course it may very well be said that Australia is not England, and what applies to a newly-colonized country cannot possibly apply to the conditions of an older one, where industry has been so widely developed as in England. And although we have endeavoured to show briefly already that, after all, the effects of the eight hours law were effects simply of a reduction of the hours of labour, and not of any contributory causes, it may, nevertheless, be well to ask ourselves whether the conditions of English industry are such as to make a shorter working day economically possible. There are many who believe that it is so, and among them we may refer to those who think like Mr. James Naylor, who put the case from the working-man's point of view very ably in the *Economic Review* of July, 1891, in his article entitled "An Artisan's View of the Eight Hours Question." He

comes to the conclusion that the economic consequence of an all-round eight hours day would be the increased demand for products upon which prosperity and profit depend, such as cycles, which are luxury, not a necessity, and which give a large margin of profit to the maker, to say nothing of the dealer. There would be, moreover, improved education, and working-men would emigrate from industrial centres to the suburbs, because they would have more time to attend to the pleasures of a suburban life. The unemployed would (as usual) be absorbed into the army of labour in order to make up in numbers for the time lost by shorter hours ; and finally he adduces the fact that much artificial illumination would be saved which is now used for the purpose of advertisement, because people would not have to keep their shops open so long ; the latter, however, is a somewhat minor consideration. In contrast to these advantages Mr. Naylor admits that there might be a possibility of reduced profits, and a dread of foreign competition—both of which disadvantages are feared not only by him but by many others. He also seems to imagine that the principle of "*Laissez faire*" would be adopted even more than at present, though we cannot quite see how he comes to this conclusion ; for the adoption of a shorter working day by legislative means is distinctly a violation of that time-honoured precept.

#### § 12. *Mr. Rae's Conclusions.*

Then again Mr. John Rae, whom we have already frequently quoted, has put forth the probable consequence of reduction of hours in a very exhaustive article in the *Contemporary Review* of October, 1891, entitled, "The

Balance-Sheet of Short Hours," in which he points out that the present very long day in many trades and occupations is a product mainly of this century, the fruit of the factory system which the Industrial Revolution brought in its train. "For the last sixty years," he says, "we have been slowly learning the lesson that all this prolongation of working hours which was nearly eating the heart out of the labouring manhood of England, was also, from the standpoint of the manufacturer's own interests, a grave pecuniary mistake." He then goes on to give copious evidence from actual experiments, that a workman can do as good a work in eight hours as in nine or ten, or more; and he argues that the sources from which the compensating progress in the labourer's personal efficiency has proceeded in previous experience, are still far from being exhausted. Among the sources which he mentions are the increased energy, contentment, and intelligence of the workman, the saving of time lost through sickness, unpunctuality, and the breaks for meal-times. Of the compensating sources here alluded to we shall have more to say in another chapter (ch. vi., vii.).

### § 13. *Economic Objections. Mr. Hobson.*

At present, having seen the more favourable side of the question put both by an artisan and professed economist, it may be well to look at the other side, and see the economic objections that have been raised to a reduction of hours. These are indeed sufficiently serious if we are to believe Mr. J. Hobson, who devoted an article to their elucidation in the *National Review* of July, 1890. We may take his remarks as typical of those of an economist of the old school, who firmly believes in the almighty power of capital,

interest, and profits. The writer points out that the cost of a shorter working day (like all other good things) must be paid for. It must come out either of interest, capital, profits, or wages. Now, if the interest on capital is reduced, there will be less motive to saving, because people apparently save mainly with the object of getting interest upon their accumulations, and if the habit of saving is discouraged, naturally the growth of capital in this country will tend to decrease. This no doubt would be true if the supposition that people save for the sake of getting interest were also true; but any practical man knows that the obtaining of good interest is by no means the only reason for thrift, and that the homely motives of provision for a rainy day and for old age are in a vast majority of cases the chief incentives. And if we look at the actual facts of the case we see clearly that in the present century the rate of interest has steadily declined, while the rate of saving has by no means declined in a like proportion, but on the contrary has continued to increase.

People are content now to receive a far lower rate of interest than they did in former times, and the ease with which Mr. Göschen's Conversion Scheme was carried out is one among many other proofs of this. And although the present rate is rather low, compared with the rates of former times, yet one cannot say that it is excessively low, and still less do we believe that a reduction of hours would have the effect of bringing it down so low as seriously to interfere with the growth of capital. This, however, is a question of pure theory, and we cannot as yet obtain any practical proofs of the effects of shorter hours upon the rate of interest, except perhaps in Australia, where the rate of interest is considerably higher than in England, though this

is to a large extent due to the great demand for capital to develop the resources of a new country. However, Mr. Hobson seems to think that a falling interest would have almost fatal results, and therefore he turns to profits and asks whether these could bear any reduction. Here, again, he gives the answer No; and consequently he concludes that it must come out of the wages.

From these facts he proceeds to deduce some very calamitous consequences; but we must at the outset point out that his views as to the probable results of a shorter working day upon wages are due to an erroneous theory of the origin of wages. Like many other people, he believes that in the price of labour all depends upon "supply and demand," apparently forgetting that other considerations have to be taken into account, and that the power of the workman to obtain an increasing share of what he produces is an important factor in the case.

But assuming the rate of wages to depend upon supply and demand, of course it is clear as long as these remain unchanged no rise or fall in wages could occur, and therefore the labourer would receive exactly the same wages as at present, minus the wages for the one or two hours by which his working day was reduced. If, for instance, he worked for eight hours he would only get wages for eight hours, and if he worked for ten hours he would only get the same wages as he is getting at present for the same length of time, even though he might choose to call his normal working day eight hours and reckon the extra two as overtime at an increased rate. All that would happen (according to Mr. Hobson) would be a change of names. The ordinary working day would be eight hours, and overtime would be paid for at an extra rate, but the total amount of

wages, both for the ordinary day and for overtime, would be the same as it was before under a longer day. Therefore, if the workman wants to have the shorter day, he must be prepared to accept a diminution of his wages, or if he is not prepared to do this, wages would have to be regulated by Act of Parliament, and a statutory wage would have to be fixed—which, as everybody knows who is acquainted with the history of wages and prices, would be a failure ; for an attempt to regulate wages by Act of Parliament has never succeeded yet, and as far as human foresight can go it never will succeed in the future.

#### § 14. *Effects on Trade.*

This decrease in the rate of wages is a sufficiently gloomy prospect for the labourers, many of whom could ill afford it, though it must be admitted that those who could afford it best are just those who are likely to get a shorter working day. Many of them, when this argument is brought before them, are ready to exclaim, with the delegate who answered Mr. Gladstone, “that they will stand by it” ; but we cannot suppose that this will be the opinion of the great mass of the industrial population, for it is generally found that the majority would prefer longer hours of labour rather than a positive deduction from their ordinary rate of pay. On the other hand it may be said that, if the cost of the working day has to come out of wages, it will be the working-classes who have to pay for it, and that if they choose to do so it is their own business and no one else’s ; while if they do not choose to do so, the shorter working day, even if generally introduced, will not last for very long.

But there seems to be a still worse prospect than a

reduction of wages, and one that will affect the nation as a whole, and not merely the working-class portion of it. It is imagined that the effects upon home and foreign trade will be disastrous. As regards our home trade it is pretty certain that if nothing happens under a shorter working day except a rise in wages and a fall in profits, there will be no particular effects visible at first, so long as the aggregate product remains the same. But in course of time, if wages rise, or even if they only remain the same as they are at present, and profits fall, the supply of capital for the various undertakings in the commercial world will gradually be checked ; people will no longer be willing to advance it for commercial undertakings, and consequently as the supply of capital diminishes the demand for it will increase, and with an increased demand there must come inevitably an increased rate of interest. Whatever happens capital will hold its own, and the rate of interest will surely go up ; otherwise capital will not be forthcoming. Now, the recovery of interest must either drive down wages or raise the prices of the commodities produced. If the prices rise, then there will be more purchases made in England of foreign goods, and the whole of our trade will in course of time go to the foreign merchant, since English manufacturers will be utterly unable to compete with him under the circumstances thus caused. Then one of two things will happen : either we shall be compelled, owing to the cries of the manufacturing community, to introduce the system of protection—which all economists believe would be very disastrous to our industry—or else we shall have to make up our minds to see the whole of our manufacturing trade passing over to foreigners, whilst we in return will lose our foreign trade, and shall not be able to sell any of our goods

abroad, owing to the high prices that we shall be compelled to put upon them to pay for British labour. If that is the case, and if we are not able to exchange our own commodities for the foreign goods which will most certainly flood our home markets, how shall we be able to pay our foreign creditors? The only means of paying them will be by living upon our national capital, which at that rate would not last for very long, or by selling our goods in foreign markets at what is practically a lower price, by giving our manufacturers bounties upon export. It is needless to say at the conclusion of this argument that, if all this were to come to pass, the trade of England would be ruined, and she would sink into the rank of a third or fourth-rate state. But that it would come to pass we most certainly do not believe; for the whole of the above argument is based (although perhaps it may not at first seem so) upon the old and erroneous assumption that wages, profits, and interest all come out of a common fund which is more or less fixed, and that consequently an increase of the one means a decrease of the other, and *vice versa*. As we have already pointed out the fallacy of this old doctrine of the wages and profits fund, it is hardly necessary to go over the same ground again. All that we need remark is, that the old cries of foreign competition have been raised over and over again throughout this century whenever the hours of labour have been reduced in textile and other industries, and that so far they have been altogether groundless. When all is said and done, English trade is undoubtedly at the present time in the most flourishing condition, and that too with considerably shorter hours and higher wages than prevail in many countries which compete with us. The trade of the United Kingdom in 1889 was larger than in any previous

year, the total of imports and exports together being no less than £742,343,336, and the figures of last year do not show any serious decrease from this high figure. But the best proof of our commercial supremacy is the fact that other countries complain of our competition just as much as we do of theirs. We remember seeing, not so long ago, in one of the German comic papers, a cartoon representing Germany, England, America, and Russia, in the semblance of racers struggling towards a given goal ; and, of course, as it was a German cartoon, Germany was placed last in the race, and England was represented as heading all other competitors. And besides the jokes of comic papers, the official reports of the German Chamber of Commerce, both for 1892 and 1891, have been couched in a very desponding tone, and continually complain of English competition. The theory that our industry will suffer from foreign competition if we adopt a shorter working day must first be proved by the facts that we already know before we can believe it. Of these facts we must speak in the next chapter.

THE WORKING  
AND MUNICIPAL  
AFFAIRS OF  
AUSTRALIA.

## CHAPTER V.

### EXPERIENCE OF A SHORTER WORKING DAY IN ENGLISH FACTORIES AND MINES.

[H. DE B. G.]

The Textile Trades—American Experiences—Hours of Mining in England. The Period 1872-73—How the Output is affected—Machinery in Mining—Present Hours and the Eight Hours Day.

#### § I. *The Textile Trades.*

THERE are two very important sets of facts to be obtained upon this question of the previous effects of a reduction of working hours; and these facts come, not from Australia, or any other country whose conditions we might grant were different from our own, but from England itself. We refer to the results shown in the working of the Factory Acts, which reduced the hours of labour, not by one or two, but by three, four, and even six hours per day, and which nevertheless, as everybody now admits, have been of immense benefit, not only to the working-classes, but to the nation at large, and have caused no decline whatever in the rate of production. In proof of this we may here quote the facts already given by Messrs. Cox and Webb on pp. 96, 97 of their book on *The Eight Hours Day*: “As regards the

effect upon prices and the export trade, the following table is conclusive. During the successive reductions of working hours, the price of cotton yarn has fallen from 25·71 pence per pound in 1821 to 12·83 pence per pound in 1884. The average price of piece-goods during the same period fell from 11·73 pence to 2·81 pence per yard.

## EXPORT OF BRITISH COTTON GOODS.

Average of Ten Years.	Quantities in Millions.		Value in Thousands.	Per Inhabitant.		
	Yards of Cloth.	Lbs. of Yarn.		Yards of Cloth.	Lbs. of Yarn.	Value in Shillings.
1821-30 ... ...	340	39	£17,210	15	2	15
1831-40 ... ...	589	90	21,390	23	4	16
Factory Acts, 1831, 1833, 1841-50	965	137	24,215	35	5	17
Factory Acts, 1844, 1847, 1850, 1851- 60	1988	171	38,030	70	6	27
Factory Acts, 1852, 1856, 1861-70	2444	136	59,620	81	4	40
Factory Acts, 1861, 1863, 1864, 1867, 1870, 1871, —1880	3693	222	71,930	110	7	43
Factory Acts, 1874, 1878						

§ 2. *American Experiences.*<sup>1</sup>

Of course it may be said that what applies to the cotton trade of Lancashire is not applicable to any other trade, and that a few more examples of the effects of shorter hours

<sup>1</sup> For further details see Appendix II.

are needed. We therefore give the words of the report of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labour upon the working of a Ten Hours law passed in that State in 1874, which at the time of its enactment was looked upon by manufacturers and many others as destined to bring ruin to their State industries. In 1891 an elaborate statistical inquiry was made, and the result is thus summarized : "It is apparent that Massachusetts with ten hours produces as much per man, or per loom, or per spindle, equal grades being considered, as other States with eleven or more hours ; and also that wages here are as high as, if not higher than, in the States where the mills run longer time." The actual figures of this rise of wages are as follows : In 1850 about 199·40 dollars per annum with seventy hours per week ; while in 1880 they were 258·19 dollars with sixty hours per week. As a result of the limitation of hours made in Massachusetts with such beneficial effects, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Main, and Vermont, which had hitherto opposed the movement, have now adopted the ten hours law.<sup>1</sup>

### § 3. *Hours of Mining in England. The Period 1872-73.*

The facts as regards the effect of reduction of hours upon the mining industries of England have been admirably summarized by Professor J. E. C. Munro in the *Economic Journal* of June, 1891. It is there pointed out that the reduction in the hours of miners during the last fifty years has been very great, and though this reduction has occurred during a period in which many legislative restrictions have been placed on mines, yet the production of coal has

<sup>1</sup> *Eight Hours Day*, p. 98.

steadily increased. In 1854 the output was sixty-four million tons, while in 1889 it was 179 million tons. "It is quite evident from these figures that any tendency towards a decrease of the output arising from the action of the legislature, or from the reduction in hours, has been altogether counterbalanced by other forces tending to increase the output. There is no reason to suppose that the operation of these forces has come to an end."

It may be well, therefore, to refer briefly to the reduction of hours in mines that has already occurred in England, and to point out clearly the somewhat overlooked fact that most miners already have the eight hours day they are asking for. If we compare the report of the Royal Commission of 1842 with the return prepared by the Home Office of the House of Commons in 1890, we find that in the earlier period fifteen hours' work per day was common in Scotland and Cumberland; fourteen hours per day were usually worked in Derbyshire and some parts of Yorkshire, and that twelve hours were the rule in other parts of England. Women and children worked the same hours as men. In 1890 the hours of hewers, as distinct from other workmen in and about mines, are given as varying from thirty-seven to fifty-two hours per week, showing a very large decrease. The most marked reduction in the hours of labour in mines occurred in 1872 and 1873, owing to the great rise in the price of coal that took place in those years. About this time the days and hours of working were reduced from five days of six hours to four and three-quarters of six hours in Northumberland, North Durham, and Cumberland; from four and a half days of eight hours to four and a half days of six hours in South Durham; and in the Midlands from sixty to forty-eight hours per week. In South Staffordshire,

where the hours are longest, they were reduced from four and a half days of eleven hours to four and a half days of eight hours ; but in North Staffordshire and Yorkshire and Wales no change occurred, though the general result was that a maximum eight hours was universal in all our mining districts. Besides the high prices just mentioned, another cause of this shortening of hours was the limitation placed on the employment of boys by the Coal Mines Regulation Act, which practically established a maximum week of fifty-four hours for hewers ; for by limiting the labour of the boys, the hours of labour of the men were diminished. In Northumberland and Durham the decrease was about half an hour in a week ; but quite apart from any limitations imposed by Act of Parliament, the high wages and prices of 1872 were quite sufficient to cause a great reduction in the average number of hours worked per week, the reason being, as Professor Munro points out, the fact that the miner, like every other member of the community, aims at a certain standard of comfort, and when he has gained that standard he prefers to take any subsequent amelioration of his condition by increasing his leisure time. For some reason or other the miner aims at an eight hours day, and when, as in 1872 and 1873, the conditions of industry and of the Coal Market enabled him to gain his wages easily, he preferred to reduce his hours to that limit rather than to increase his wages.

#### § 4. *How the Output is affected.*

But this period, 1872 and 1873, is also valuable for enabling us to determine how far the reduction of working hours influences the output of each individual. The follow-

ing table shows the average output of each man employed during the five years 1868 to 1872<sup>1</sup>—

	Number of Men.	Average yearly output per man <i>in Tons.</i>
1868	346,820	302
1869	345,446	316
1870	350,894	321
1871	370,881	317
1872	413,334	299

From this table it appears that between the years 1871 and 1872 the average output was diminished by eighteen tons per man per annum, and the Select Committee of the House of Commons appointed "to inquire into the causes of the present dearness and scarcity of coal," make the following remarks upon the above figures: "The comparison between 1872 and former years is affected by the facts that the previous returns were not compulsory, and did not include in all cases the whole of the persons employed in the mine and about the colliery, nor do the returns admit of any account being taken of the saving of labour, either in the mines or above ground, in consequence of improved arrangements for working the collieries, or delivering the coal into the waggons for transport. The evidence given in some individual cases shows that the quantity raised per man has diminished in the last year, and on the whole the Committee think that the diminution of the yield per man since 1871 is not much less than that shown in the table."

Nevertheless, while the output per man was reduced, the total output was increased, as the following table shows—

<sup>1</sup> *Economic Journal*, June, 1891, p. 258.

Years.	Tons.
1869	107,299,634
1870	110,289,722
1871	117,186,278
1872	123,386,758

Hence it appears that notwithstanding the reduction in hours, the output of coal was increased in the year 1872 by nearly five and three-quarter millions of tons, the chief causes of the increase being the development of old mines and the opening of new ones.

But the high prices of coal did not last for very long ; they fell from 23s. per ton in 1873, to 16s. 6d. in 1874 ; to 10s. 3d. in 1876 ; and 8s. 6d. in 1878. Consequently wages fell also, and just as previously when wages were high the miner worked shorter hours, now, when they were lower, he had to increase them by working longer hours, though even then his wages were somewhat reduced. We therefore see, from the experience of the exceptional period just quoted, that the reduction in hours does not mean a reduction in the total output of coal in the country. And, on the other hand, it certainly tends to increase the efficiency of the workman. If we compare the hours worked in districts like South Staffordshire and Durham, where less than eight hours is the usual day for hewers, with districts like Glamorganshire, where the day is rather longer, we find that in Durham the average output per workman is 490 or 499 tons per annum, while in Glamorganshire it is only 347. Indeed the output per hewer is higher in Durham and South Staffordshire than in any other district, because the miner wants to hew as much coal as possible during his working day. Knowing

that his wages depend upon the quantity of coal he gets out, he endeavours to make them as high as possible. And apart from the question of wages, it is a well-known fact that when physical exertion is necessary, the longer the day the slower the workman becomes. It may not be easy to find out the exact number of hours that an average healthy man can work with the least possible detriment to himself, and with the greatest possible advantage in the production of that upon which he is engaged, but from the numerous examples that we have referred to in previous pages,<sup>1</sup> it seems to be an established fact that a reduction of hours invariably results in better work, and that it does not necessarily of itself diminish production.

### § 5. *Machinery in Mining.*

Even if the efficiency of the miner remained only the same under a shorter working day, we might fairly assume that the efficiency of the machinery used for bringing up coal from the mine to the surface would be improved. Here again we are judging, not from theories, but from facts. One of the largest colliery proprietors in Lancashire was only able in 1852 to wind 600 tons per day from twelve pits, whereas now he can wind the same quantity in one day from a single pit. Professor Munro quotes a table<sup>2</sup> to prove that in Northumberland, Durham, and South Staffordshire, where the miners work the shortest hours, and yet hew the largest amount per man, the winding machinery and the methods of bringing coal to the surface are superior to those found in other districts. In these counties coal can be brought to the surface in a shorter time than it takes to hew it; in

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 73, 90.

<sup>2</sup> *Economic Journal*, p. 250.

Yorkshire, Lancashire, and South Wales it requires longer time ; and as the distance of the face from the surface is not sufficient to explain these differences, we are forced to conclude that the appliances and methods used for hauling coal in many of the coal-fields are open to improvement. Moreover, it should be remembered that necessity here, as also elsewhere, is the mother of invention, and while it is true that many inventions that have benefited the race can be traced to a happy discovery, or a series of laborious experiments, it is quite true on the other hand that many discoveries and inventions are solely due to necessity.

#### *§ 6. Present Hours and the Eight Hours Day.*

However, as regards the practical working of an Eight Hours Bill, which after all is the most important thing for us to deal with at the present time, the facts seem to be, that practically it would make no difference whatever to the present output of coal in England, for the simple reason that an eight hours day already exists to a large extent, and merely requires to be put upon a legal basis by Act of Parliament. On page 112 we quote a table which gives a statement of the number of hours worked in each coal district at present, and the number of hours which miners would work per week under an eight hours day, supposing them to work the same number of days as they do at the present time. The table is based upon the return of the Home Office upon the hours of labour in mines in 1890. From this it is apparent that in Northumberland, Durham, South Staffordshire, and Worcestershire, no change would occur in the hours of hewers. The greatest change will be in Lancashire and Nottinghamshire,

where the weekly hours would be reduced as much as six and a half or seven, and also in South Wales and Yorkshire. These are very substantial reductions, but they are based upon the supposition that after the shorter day is introduced miners will take the same time as now for meals, and they will only work the same average number of days per week. But it should be noticed that in those districts where the eight hours work is already the rule, very little or no break is made for meals, and that in many other districts the saving of a meal-time under an eight hours day would more than compensate for the reduction in hours. In short, if the hewers were to surrender their meal-time, they could work an eight hours day from bank to bank, and work at the face as many hours as they do at the present time, and in no case exceed from thirty-five to forty-four hours per week. (See Table, p. 112.)

The above remarks refer only to hewers, but another table given by Professor Munro makes it clear that, taking other workers about mines into account, only a very small proportion of the mining population outside South Wales, Durham, and Northumberland, whether hewers or other underground men, are actually engaged at work for over forty-eight hours per week. Hence we discover—what seems to be frequently overlooked—that we have already had in England considerable experience of an eight hours day in one of our most important industries, and that the shortening of hours has not been prejudicial to this industry. This fact, coupled with the experience of the textile trades, should go far to reassure us in reducing the hours of labour upon a still larger scale.

TABLE. 1

Table showing the reduction of the hours of Hewers that would take place per week if the hours were reduced to eight from bank to bank, and the same number of days were worked as at the present time.

		Number of Hewers.	Hours worked per week.	Hours per week under 8 hours day.	Reduction in hours per week.
E. S.	Clackmannan ...	591	47.3	44	3.3
	Edinburgh ...	2,703	47.9	44	3.9
	Fife, Kinross and Perth ...	5,170	46.9	44	2.9
	Haddington ...	596	38.7	34	4.7
	Lanark (part of) ...	11,662	51	44	7
	Linlithgow ...	2,598	49.5	44	5.2
W. S.	Stirling (part of) ...	2,228	44.1	40	4.1
	Ayrshire ...	7,499	48.1	41.6	6.5
	Stirling (part of) ...	845	47.8	43.4	4.4
	Lanark (part of) ...	8,011	46.3	39.4	6.9
	Dumbarton ...	792	45.9	41.3	4.6
	Renfrew ...	532	49.3	42.4	6.9
N.	Argyle and Dumfries ...	205	46.4	46.1	3
	Cumberland ...	5,885	46.5	44.8	1.7
	Y. Yorkshire ...	34,742	44.0	40	4.0
	M. Lancashire, N. & E. ...	18,557	47.8	41.3	6.5
	L. Lancashire, W. ...	15,744	45.0	38.6	6.4
	M. Derbyshire ...	17,470	47.4	40.8	6.6
N. E.	Leicestershire ...	2,448	46.6	38.9	7.7
	Nottinghamshire ...	10,159	47.3	39.4	7.9
	Warwickshire ...	2,117	46.7	44	2.7
	Cheshire ...	1,711	45.4	40.1	5.3
	Shropshire ...	2,083	42.3	39.9	2.4
	Staffordshire, N. ...	8,467	46.7	41.7	5
S. W.	Brecon ...				
	Glamorgan ...	13,453	51.7	44.8	6.9
	Monmouth ...				
S. W.	Somerset ...	1,582	49.2	47.5	2.7
	Gloucester ...	3,317	47.0	43.2	3.8
	Brecon ...	403	50.8	44.8	6.0
	Carmarthen ...	1,017	52.2	46.4	5.8

No change would occur in the following districts—

N.	Northumberland ...	11,840	37.1	—	—
	Durham (part of) ...	8,545	39.4	—	—
	Durham ...				
	Westmoreland and N. R. ...	24,178	40.3	—	—
S. S.	Yorks ...				
	Staffordshire, S. ...	9,752	40.8	—	—
	Worcestershire ...	1,393	40.8	—	—

<sup>1</sup> Munro : *Economic Journal*, June, 1891.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ADVANTAGES OF, AND OBJECTIONS TO, A SHORTER WORKING DAY.

[R. A. H.]

The Factory Acts—Human Labour—Mental and Physical Improvements—Uniformity of Output—Long and Short Hours—Better Management—Foreign and Cheap Labour—Objections to a Shorter Day—Foreign Competition again—Foreign Work and Wages.

#### § 1. *The Factory Acts.*

SPEAKING now more as to the direct advantages of an eight hours system, we may say that just as the theory that a rise in wages necessarily means higher cost in production has proved fallacious, so probably it will be found as regards shorter hours. Direct and indirect benefits will fully compensate for the change. Even if it were to mean a reduction in the capitalists' gains, though this is unlikely, yet provided the community at large is raised, the benefit of the change would not be disproved. Happily it is now being admitted that the greatest good of the greatest number is to be the aim of future legislation. At all events it is a maxim that most Parliamentary candidates, whether Liberal or Conservative, are ready enough to voice loudly on the political platform.

As it is found where labour is best paid, that *there* are the best, and, with certain qualifications, the cheapest products, so also will it probably be as regards reduced hours. Notwithstanding all the dire predictions as to the results that were to follow the abolition of the old ten hours system (to which no one for a moment would now think of returning), these forebodings have all proved utterly false. Some of the most forward men of the times had blindfolded eyes on that question. When such a man as John Bright, the "Tribune of the People," showed his "human nature," and went wrong on the question of the Factory Acts, it cannot cause much surprise that many are to-day unable to see through the present question. When the Ten Hours Bill was before Parliament he quoted numberless figures to show that our trade must be infallibly ruined if it passed, and wound up his speech by the following impassioned peroration : "Believing that the proposition was most injurious and destructive to the best interests of the country —believing that it was contrary to all principles of sound legislation—that it was a delusion practised upon the working-classes—that it was advocated by those who had no knowledge of the economy of manufactures—believing that it was one of the worst measures ever passed in the shape of an Act of Parliament, and that if it were now made law the necessities of trade and the demands alike of the workmen and masters would compel them to retrace the steps they had taken—believing this, he felt compelled to give the motion for the second reading his most strenuous opposition." The memory of John Bright will not suffer from his injudicious remarks on this subject, and they are only quoted to show how even the best minds may be blind to good measures.

No doubt it was owing to Conservative support that these measures were passed in face of so much Whig opposition. "Honour to whom honour is due." But, whoever passed them, no legislative measures have been of more benefit to this country. And as in the past it has been clearly proved that, the longer the hours of work the more the workers become mere machines, surely by a further shortening, which is proved to be absolutely necessary from the altered conditions of their surroundings, and apart from other necessary improvements, the general physique of the citizen will be improved and the nation will correspondingly benefit.

### § 2. *Human Labour.*

For human labour is not a marketable commodity like a bale of cotton or a ton of pig-iron, though it is often treated as such. Fortunately, on all sides we are rapidly awaking to a recognition of this fact, as was excellently stated in a recent number of a trade paper (*The Ironmonger*) : "Far too many masters in all departments of trade and commerce fail to give sufficient thought to this most important subject. They seem to forget that their employés are not mere machines, but sentient human beings with hopes and fears, aspirations, sentiments, and all the attributes which are common to mankind."

The President of the United States, the head of some sixty-five millions of people, recently expressed sentiments of the same nature when addressing the marble-workers of Vermont. "When a man is put at a machine he should not be regarded by his employers as part of it; but the human nature and the aspirations of a man should still be recognized."

And it is, therefore, being rapidly recognized that the worker has his rights, not to be granted on some more convenient day, but to be met with a fair and open spirit of concession. If, therefore, the workers declare at the ballot-box that certain concessions, in themselves tangible and reasonable enough, are desired, are these to be denied owing to the powerful action of one or two particular classes? If so, of what use is legislation?

### *§ 3. Mental and Physical Improvement.*

It is rightly claimed that the shortening of hours would lead to improvements, mental and physical. Any action by which such change or improvement is effected, relating to some 8,000,000 of human beings in this country alone, is not to be lightly put on one side or trifled with. If effected, and if even a partial accomplishment of the end in view can be attained, the raising of such a considerable portion of the community must be of the highest benefit to the nation as a whole. Increasing wants of the majority must increase trade all round, provided that men have the wherewithal to supply these increased wants. If where one rich man spends £1000 in luxuries, the purchase of which probably does not assist the trades that confer most benefit, we had 1000 workers each spending £1, it is more than probable that the turnover of the latter would stimulate trade of a nature that is more lasting and certain.

### *§ 4. Uniformity of Output.*

Again, the writer is strongly inclined to think that shorter hours would eventually tend to more uniform output, and,

to some extent, assist in modifying the serious fluctuations of business which are baneful alike to master and man. There is nothing that an employer peruses with more interest than his order sheets. Now, under the present system, too often there is extreme high pressure at one time, followed by a reversal which is exceedingly disastrous to all concerned. Trade suddenly expands, machinery is wanted in haste, telegrams fly to and fro, promises are made which often cannot be performed. If an order of importance is given, probably penalties are specified. The manufacturer is in a state of feverish anxiety until the matter is cleared off his books. Overtime must be worked, and there is high pressure all round. If a uniform day existed, and overtime were made more difficult, all employers in each particular branch being on the same footing would alike work under the same conditions, and would not have the same temptations as at present to outbid one another and work at such high pressure.

Probably under such an altered state of conditions, the original requiree of the machine ordered, in making up his plans, knowing the impossibility of breaking the law, would not be in that chronic state of tension that now so often exists. He would know that all manufacturers from whom tenders were invited were on the same footing, and that if overtime was worked it would probably be at such excessive rates as to make him think twice before specifying an unreasonable time for delivery. It would act in the same way with the manufacturer, who, in order to tender at the lowest price consistent with profit, would not be tempted to reckon upon overtime.

This point is dealt with more fully when considering overtime, which it is probable must be allowed under

certain conditions, stringent but workable enough in themselves, as will be seen.

If the above point can be attained, it alone would be worth all the trouble and anxiety spent in promoting the measure. No doubt a good deal of thoughtless high pressure now comes from many well-intentioned employers simply through anxiety. Business affairs will always possess a sufficiently anxious element, but an eight hours day, with overtime reduced as much as conveniently possible, would, for many reasons, possibly be found to act as ballast, being a steady element rather than a disturbing element. Once get employers by actual experience to see the matter in this light, and probably they would benefit as well as the workmen.

Indeed, there would be much to be gained by any feasible plan that would reduce the now too high pressure, and already the Unions have done much to bring this within measurable distance of accomplishment, by so controlling labour that employers throughout the country in the same class of trade are to some extent on a similar footing as to the conditions under which they employ labour. The writer most firmly believes that the pecuniary benefit would, in the long run, be found to exist as much on the masters' as on the workers' side. Perhaps this is not a high standpoint to take up, but it is a human one. With the comparatively small measures reasonably asked for by the workers, there are many incidental savings likely to occur. There seems to be a reasonable prospect, all things being most carefully considered, that their accomplishment, without any serious or even appreciable increase of cost coming into question, might be safely expected. The demands of the worker will have to be much larger than the one under consideration

before capitalists' toes are trodden upon ; yet, owing to mere selfishness in many cases, want of knowledge in others, all sorts of objections, many of them without rhyme or reason, are trotted out.

### § 5. *Long and Short Hours.*

In the *Contemporary Review* of October, 1891, there was an excellent article by Mr. John Rae on "The Balance Sheet of Short Hours," which has already been referred to. He clearly proved that the successive prolongation of working hours has, even from the manufacturer's point of view, been a grave pecuniary mistake. The wearing away of the prime motor, the worker himself, has proved a very unsatisfactory experiment, to say nothing of the feelings of the motor experimented upon. As he points out, it has been found by the introduction of the nine hours day that with "flesh and blood machines" an hour's more running in the day did not mean an hour's more product in the day, and that after a certain limit an extra hour of repose has much higher productive value than an extra hour of work. A French manufacturer once said to Guizot, "We used to say it was the last hour that gave us our profit, but we have now learnt that it was the last hour that ate up our profits." There is also an interesting reference respecting the introduction in Sheffield of the Saturday half-holiday. It is pleasant for a Sheffield man to find that this town was one of the first to encourage granting more leisure time to the workers. Mr. Guest, a Sheffield cutler, in his evidence before the Children's Employment Commission of 1862, stated that "so long ago as 1848 he granted his men the Saturday half-holiday, and that other large works in the

town adopted it, and found its profitableness." As an egg is full of meat, so is Mr. Rae's article full of suggestions. One or two points brought out by him may be briefly referred to; they all prove the advisability of granting shorter hours. He states that Messrs. Holden of Bradford, the largest wool-combers in the world, who have mills in France running seventy-two hours a week, and mills in England running only fifty-six, find they can comb wool more cheaply in England than in France, though they pay higher wages for the short day in England than for the long day in France, and employ exactly the same machinery in both countries. Mr. Rae also remarks, and it is one of the most vital parts of the whole question, "the resources of better methods are far from being exhausted in our industry." It is in this direction that we can look very largely to an easy accomplishment of shorter hours of work. It is principally the setting of our minds to look the matter straight in the face that is required.

#### § 6. *Better Management.*

One might say, almost without doubt, that as regards many trades, by more systematic arrangement of work and better organization, an extra hour might readily be saved without any reduction in the amount of work turned out. There is now often sheer waste of time. There seems no reason why the workers should continue to suffer from bad management, for they are in no way responsible for this, though all the same they do now suffer for it. It is the directing hand of the employer or manager, who has had, or should have had, more facilities by means of technical training, education, and other advantages, that is responsible

in this direction. Besides, also, as pointed out by Mr. Rae, "by reducing the interruptions of work in the course of the week, short hours have also reduced the interruptions in the course of the day and in the course of the year. They have brought with them greater promptitude and punctuality in the attendance at work."

Of course there are many who will, no doubt, think slightly of such considerations, but there is indeed much in them below the surface. Mr. Rae says truly: "The world takes a long time to appreciate adequately the enormous productive value of mere contentment and cheerfulness of mind. It was only the other day that the sharpest people on earth still thought slave labour profitable." His final observations are "that the most probable effect of an eight hours day will be the same as was the effect of the ten hours day, viz. that the old rate of daily production will be successfully maintained, and that the situation in consequence will be in no way changed, whether as respects wages, profits, the unemployed, or foreign competition." These strong statements are thoroughly warranted and backed up by the different facts quoted in his article. They have been supported also quite independently by Professor Munro, in an excellent paper read before the Political Economy Circle of the National Liberal Club, on "The Economic Effects of an Eight Hours Day for Coal Miners," wherein he points out several very valuable facts, which can to some extent guide us in considering how an Eight Hours Law would effect other industries. Speaking of the time lost in taking meals, he points out that the amount occupied is proportionately more as the hours of work increase. Also whilst the system of double shifts tends to increase the output per man in

Durham, nevertheless apart from this the greater efficiency of the hewer when working short hours has been clearly proved by the experience of the Northern coal-fields. The following figures give the average output for certain districts during the year 1887—

	Output per Underground Worker.	Output per Underground and Overground Worker.	Average Hours of Hewers per Week.
Staffordshire, S.	563	422	40.8
Durham, N.	490	383	39.4
Durham, S.	499	379	40.3
Lancashire, W.	396	324	45.0
Yorkshire	372	300	44.0
Glamorganshire	347	297	51.7

Whilst local conditions cause certain differences, nevertheless it would clearly appear from the above figures that the shorter the average hours, the better the output. The same remark also applies to higher wages, for, as pointed out in a recent article from *Industries*, “it will be noticed, as a curious and apparently unexplained circumstance, that the district paying the lowest average rate of wages has the least industrious body of workmen.” To those who think, it would appear to be only natural that this should be so.

### § 7. *Foreign and Cheap Labour.*

Similar testimony comes from abroad. An English Consul, writing from Germany, has pointed out that in times of pressure of trade and demands for minerals, overtime naturally results, and a twelve hours instead of an

eight hours shift is worked, but that experience goes to show that the average production per man per day is thus considerably reduced. The average working day for hewers in England is from forty-eight to fifty hours per week, whilst in France and Germany four to six hours per week longer are worked. Notwithstanding this, the production per man is far higher in England. Thus, as Professor Munro says, these facts "tend to show it is not the length of hours of labour that enables foreign countries to compete with us." In fact, as Mr. Mundella has aptly put it, it is, on the contrary, rather the length of hours abroad that has prevented foreign competition from being so effective.

The same testimony is reiterated over and over again by thoughtful observers. Here, for instance, is a voice from the other side of the Atlantic, speaking to us through the columns of the *Daily News*, wherein we read the following :—

"Mr. Schoenhof, the distinguished American economist, has just completed a series of articles on the McKinley Tariff Act, which he has written for *The New York Times*. Mr. Schoenhof has here enforced the conclusion at which he has arrived after long years of study of the industrial problem, both in Europe and America. It is, briefly, that the lowest wages and the longest hours are in the long run the most wasteful ; or, to put it the other way, that shorter hours and better pay are absolutely the cheapest. The United States, therefore, need no protection against European cheap labour. The well-paid workman, whose strength is not over-taxed, will produce more in nine or ten hours than the ill-paid and underfed workman will produce in sixteen or eighteen. Moreover, only those who labour under the easier conditions can be entrusted with the

management of the more delicate machinery which so largely increases production. American labour is, in Mr. Schoenhof's contention, the cheapest, because it is the most highly paid. English labour is the next cheapest, and for the same reason. Nothing can be more foolish, says our American critic, than the complaint occasionally heard in England, that it is impossible to compete with Germany, because the sixty-six hours of the German working week must produce more than the fifty-four hours of the English. How can this be the case, when all the Continental nations defend themselves against the results of England's high pay and short hours by the familiar expedient of high protective tariffs? Similarly, the nail-maker in the Black Country, who earns two shillings in fourteen hours, produces not only absolutely, but relatively, less in his working day than the American who earns four dollars and a half, or nearly a pound, in ten hours. The latter represents a 'remarkable combination of intellectual and mechanical force'—that is to say, he puts his brain as well as his muscle and all his best energies into the work. The well-paid workman belongs to a higher social scale, and this tells not only on his intelligence, but on all the aptitudes that tend to his efficiency. The capitalists of the Continent have altogether failed to perceive this truth. When the Berlin masters found that the men made 'too much money' under the piecework system introduced immediately after the war, they idiotically forced them back to the day rate, with its greatly diminished productiveness. Mr. Schoenhof's views are interesting, not only by their novelty, but by their comprehensiveness. He very clearly perceives that the worker is the sum total of all his forces of labour—of the ethical not less than of the mechanical—and that, in

bettering him all round, we better him for his particular calling."<sup>1</sup>

§ 8. *Objections to a Shorter Day.*

Mr. Sydney Buxton, M.P., has written an excellent shilling book, *The Political Manual*, wherein he succinctly condenses, in the shape of short specific statements, the leading arguments for and against on the questions of the day, and the present writer has been specially struck with those given respecting two important matters, free education, and the eight hours day. With the former because, now being a matter of history, we can more readily see whether the leading arguments based *against* the introduction of free education have so far proved valid after the working of the measure. In the light of actual experience of its working since last September, it is almost ludicrous to see how events have falsified the fancies that were such perfect giants of objections, for many of them, be it noted, are of similar character to those now urged against the eight hours proposal. They are, briefly, interference with the subject's liberty, pauperization, the recognition of that "dreaded Socialism," and decrease of attendance. Further, education was really to suffer, and "the fabric of family life, built up on the foundation of responsibility and sacrifice, was to be seriously undermined." Facts have shown how baseless were these assertions, and how highly beneficial education has proved, and how much the change has been appreciated. Indeed, it has been appreciated so much that it has seemed well to some of the quondam opponents of the measure to discover now that they have never really objected to it after all.

<sup>1</sup> March 3rd, 1892.

The arguments quoted in Mr. Buxton's work "against" the eight hours day seem to be principally of an agnostic type—"We do not know"—or what is worse—"We do not want to know." Judging from the results in the cases quoted by the writer later on, it would appear that the objections are mostly of that kind that would vanish into thin air when exposed to the finger of fact, just as in the case of the free education measure. In dealing with the unknown, no doubt such arguments, mainly of the "bogie man" type, are convenient to interested opponents. Let us examine them more closely. Many of them are probably objections of detail, and so trivial that the writer is under the impression that if it was a case of employers asking, instead of being asked, for favours, cogent reasons to meet the objections would be quickly forthcoming. That there are real difficulties, and, in the writer's opinion, prohibitive ones, against a strictly eight hours day—that is, forty-four hours per week for all trades with overtime absolutely prohibited—goes without saying. Changes of this nature require careful consideration, but the main thing is whether they are right in principle. If so, to those who have the general welfare of the nation at heart, there can only seem one answer. Therefore let every opportunity be given for the fullest and fairest consideration, both from the employers' and the workers' point of view. Then, as is generally the case, the means to accomplish the right, though they may be difficult, can with perseverance and caution be devised, and the measure desired can be safely carried through.

*§ 9. Foreign Competition.*

One great bugbear is that a shorter working day will seriously increase Continental competition against us. If so, why has not the shortening of the working day to nine hours affected us more? In 1854 the proportion of British exports to foreign countries, other than our colonies and dependencies, was 65 per cent. In 1890 it was 66 per cent., and the fluctuations are shown to be very slight when arranged on quinquennial averages. It was the same also as regards our imports, which average 75 per cent. from foreign countries, and were practically the same in 1854.

I have just quoted Mr. Mundella's statement that "it is rather the long hours of labour in other countries that saves us from their competition." The reason he gives is "because their long hours impair the personal efficiency of their labour, and competition between nations is growing every day more and more to be mainly a competition in personal efficiency." Judging, too, from other remarks of Mr. Mundella, who has had special experience in the textile trades, it appears that matters in these trades are much upon the same footing as in other departments of industry, and that the long hours of foreign workers assist materially in checking their competition with us. Besides, too, even if foreign competition apply the stimulus of a want of more efficient machinery, our engineers here will soon be ready with improvements to meet the further demands. Invention and manufactures would both be stimulated to further advances. It always pays to expend capital in the best tools, human tools as well.

But what says Mr. Buxton's manual as to foreign

competition? Take this clause from the side "in favour of" eight hours. It is fully borne out by facts. "Long hours and low wages do not give a real advantage in foreign competition. High wages, short hours, and the resulting improved mental and physical development, facilitate the introduction of more effective methods, and thus reduce the cost of production." Which comes to the same as John Stuart Mill stated before, that "general low wages never caused any country to undersell its rivals, nor did general high wages ever hinder it from doing so."

Mr. Andrew Carnegie, again, one of the shrewdest of Americans, has stated that "England has at her feet the markets of the world for manufactured articles, and that whatever may be said of foreign competition, it cannot possibly amount to much in the future." It is amusing to find a protectionist of protectionists saying this.

Although it is about one of the most improbable cases under the sun, let us imagine the dreaded Continental working-man getting possession of our trade. Would it—could it—last? Is it not probable that this is another of the "bogie man" objections, another of those remnants of superstition that were employed to frighten us in our nursery days? Let us look at the matter in another light. Let it be assumed for the sake of argument—certainly not admitted as a matter of fact—that employers abroad did obtain temporary advantages by means of lower wages and longer hours. In these present days of interchange of thought and opinion, the workers there, not being machines merely, would soon find they were being exploited in their masters' interests. It is surprising to see how little employers recognize this side of the question, though they might often be better informed on such matters. As a

matter of fact it has been most clearly proved that long hours and low wages are the veriest antidotes to economical production, to say nothing of the higher side of the question. Surely our miserable experience of factory slavery a couple of generations ago should have taught us that. Besides, too, the representatives of the workers who have attended international congresses know well that the feeling against long hours is growing abroad quite as rapidly as here. Give labour another twenty years of organization and experimenting as to the best methods of marshalling its forces, and the world will see great changes. Therefore from merely selfish motives employers would do well to look ahead and meet reasonable demands in a reasonable manner. As before pointed out, if the employer abroad obtained a temporary advantage, it would very soon end in the workers in those countries seeing that they were being made use of at the expense of their long hours and less pay. But even as it is, under the assumption that long hours will always be the rule abroad, no great harm is likely to result to us provided that we continue to strengthen the position of our workers, and liberally grant them concessions which shall lead not only to their greater comfort and happiness, but to increased personal efficiency.

It is somewhat amusing to find how this cry of foreign competition is raised, not only in England, but against England when one is on the Continent. In England we hear of foreign competition as the one thing we have to fear, and yet when we go abroad and talk with business men of French or German nationality, the one great complaint is the fierce competition from Great Britain. In each case, both at home and abroad, this complaint is often employed as a lever for pulling down the wages of the

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worker. It is *he* who suffers. Some day, when the true solidarity of labour is attained, and a better state of international feeling prevails, as it is now beginning to do, the British and foreign worker will mutually arrange to stop some of this cutting between employers. For it must not be forgotten by English workers that a French or a German worker has also to live. Again, we must not imagine that we work shorter hours than foreigners in every department of industry. In some points, such as the age of children commencing work, we are positively behind several Continental nations. Sir John Gorst was sent to Berlin to the famous "Kaiser's Conference of Labour," and there heard what other nations were prepared to do on this subject, and yet we backed out of the fair proposals then discussed. This friend of labour must have felt deeply chagrined that the Government of this mighty empire refused to come up to the proposed standard; in other words, refused to protect, as it ought to have done, the rising portion of the nation. If it was not for British action the limit of age might have been universally raised. As it is, the age now stands at eleven instead of twelve years, and England remains behind. It would seem therefore that in some respects we may learn from our Continental friends, and that they are more likely to come up to our standard as regards length of working hours. In the not far off future the age of the child commencing work will without doubt be raised to thirteen or fourteen years, and meanwhile he will have been allowed a fair and reasonable chance of getting the best education.

*§ 10. Foreign Wages and Work.*

Moreover, Continental wages are not so extremely low as is sometimes supposed. The writer, in his travels abroad, has visited some of the largest Continental works, and cannot find, at any rate in his own particular lines (engineering and metallurgy), the extremely low rates of wages believed to exist. That the wages are lower and hours longer is true, but the exceedingly cheap labour of which one is often told is only of the most unskilled and untaught kind, such as could not compete, even at half the price, with the average backbone and energy of our English artisan. Certainly as a whole the cost of production is not less, for as before pointed out, it does not at all follow that low charges, with their usual concomitants as regards the workers' condition and therefore fitness for work, mean low cost of production. Skilled labour on the Continent commands proportionately as high remuneration as here. In Continental working-men there is, however, not that staying power or vigour which is possessed by English and American artisans. Another factor greatly in our favour, from a selfish point of view, and one which cannot be easily altered on the Continent, has probably arisen from the long period of subjection, from their liability to conscription and military service, and other disadvantages from which this country is fortunately free.

But to resume the question of wages. From personal inquiries, the writer knows that in certain large works in Germany, employing over 3000 men, the rates of wages are not more than 10 to 12 per cent. less than the rates current here. Similar inquiries as regards one of the

largest firms in France, where work commences at 6.30 a.m. and continues up to 6 p.m. at night, with one and a half hour's interval for dinner, show that the wages are also much on the same level as the case just mentioned. Now both in France and Germany the cost of living is much less than in England, and hence these wages are really much higher than they appear. In neither case, however, are extra rates paid for overtime, but the value of overtime work being so questionable, it is doubtful whether this in itself is of any advantage to our Continental competitors.

In regard to efficiency, I have had some candid testimony from foreign visitors. French, Germans, Americans, and visitors of other nationalities to the works of the writer's firm have in certain cases had special opportunity for comparing work done with that in their respective countries, both as regards cost and efficiency. The writer has been invariably told (except as regards America), "Your men work much harder than ours." These are facts which speak for themselves. Is it not to be expected that the much longer course of training in the handling and working of tools and machinery of all kinds, in which much technical skill is required, has told in our favour? Our supremacy cannot be easily wrested if we are true to ourselves. Give our workers more leisure and better chances of education, and there is not much to fear. It is in this last respect (the excellent system of free education in America has now been in force in many parts forty or fifty years) that the Americans have raced ahead of us and balanced to a certain extent the disproportion which necessarily existed in our favour owing to our special practical knowledge. But even as regards America, visitors from that country have told me that they considered the men employed at the writer's works

were, except in specialized work where we English are certainly behind, giving equally as good output as in their own country. And as regards a comparison between American and Continental workmen, it is interesting to quote the report of the American commissioners sent by their Government to investigate into labour questions on this side the water and emigration. They say the superior conditions and advantages in the United State are, "better living, exemption from military duty, from burdensome taxation, from regulations involving freedom of movement and personal liberty, and better chances of rising to a higher social level, higher wages, and shorter hours." No doubt the comparison was rather taken as regards the Continent than Great Britain, but as a confirmation that shorter hours do not mean lower wages, it is instructive, especially as being so recent a report.

From the foregoing it will be seen that the serious competition of the future in our export trade is likely to be, not so much from Europe with its long hours and low pay, as from America with its shorter hours and higher wages. But even then, whilst we admit that our export trade is of the highest importance, we believe that the great value of home requirements is far too much minimized. If, without injury to the workers, a diminution of trade to a steady even though not so large a turnover were effected, which would temporarily, it is to be hoped, lead to the breaking up of some of the rottenness existing in financial circles and on the Stock Exchange, this country would not be so much worse off.

A change to shorter working days is objected to because it is said the output would be reduced. This has already been discussed (p. 107), so I need not refer to it again.

Also it is said that an increase of plant will be necessary to accomplish the same work, and then the starting of new businesses will be rendered much more difficult owing to the larger amount of capital required. The writer can only say that this would appear rather an advantage than otherwise. Owing to the ease with which new limited companies are started, competition, good and necessary as it is for stimulation, is often overdone, and the result is often beneficial neither to the consumer, who gets inferior goods, nor to the manufacturer, whose profits come down to zero. Hence has resulted the formation of Rings and Trusts, which have often resulted in much greater evil than would be ever likely to occur from reduced hours of labour. Whilst speaking of unreasonable competition, some restriction might well be placed in the way of incompetent persons who have failed twice or three times in business again starting on their own account. Business is as much a science as other departments, and to attain the best results requires as much training as any of the arts, yet how recklessly it can be entered upon, and how little training is devoted by those taking it up to these necessary adjuncts and commercial training. Therefore, as in the case of professions, some difficulties in the way of incompetent persons undertaking business might prove of no little service.

## CHAPTER VII.

### PRACTICAL EXPERIMENTS.

[R. A. H.]

Messrs. Johnson and Co.—Questions and Answers—Messrs. Brunner, Mond and Co.—The Sheffield Gas Co. and Huddersfield Tramways—Messrs. Wm. Allan and Co.—Messrs. Short—Hadfield's Steel Foundry Co.—Time-Tables—Various Examples.

#### § 1. *Messrs. Johnson and Co.*

So far we have been indulging in theory, and now it is refreshing to turn from the consideration of what might or might not occur under certain eventualities to what we actually know. As the Americans say, "Let us come down to the rock bottom of fact." The writer has been at some trouble to ascertain what is the opinion of those who have seen their way to launch out in the direction of adopting shorter working hours. Straws are represented as showing which way the wind blows, and if the instances now quoted show anything, they most positively prove that a shorter working day can be adopted with the utmost advantage. And, indeed, as the cases cited refer to the daily labour of several thousands of workers, the results cannot be considered unimportant.

The first to be noticed is that of Messrs. S. H. Johnson

and Co., of the Engineering Works, Carpenter's Road, Stratford, London. This firm has courteously given the writer full replies to a set of questions put to them on this Eight Hours Question (forty-eight hours per week). They have been working on these lines for about three and a half years, and have applied the system to more than one hundred men, representing engineers, fitters, moulders, and labourers. They premise their letter by the very wise remark that when considering the advisability of an eight hours day, they were convinced that it must be accomplished with modification in the time and arrangements of the work to be done. They lay stress, too, upon the question that, strictly speaking, a man cannot do in eight hours what he could do in nine hours. No doubt there is a point in our present condition of affairs where the question can be reduced to an arithmetical absurdity, but the writer thoroughly believes it is more than probable that a man can do as much in eight as in nine hours. That is, he can work better in eight more suitably chosen hours than in the present more objectionable form. The latter system means commencement at an unreasonably early time, and the master does not, in many cases, benefit from it, but the contrary. No mere arbitrariness on the master's part (a position too often assumed) ought therefore to stand in the way of a change, if such can be shown to be possible.

This point has been so fully dealt with before that it is unnecessary to go further into the question here, but if it is at all probable that by bringing to bear increased intelligence (and a great stimulus to this is to put the workman on his honour, and meet him like a fellow-being), a man can really do as much in the shorter as now in the longer hours, then combining this with the advantages pointed out

by Messrs. Johnson, viz. better arrangements of work, it is almost certain that the community at large would really reap much benefit from the change ; in fact, the man who buys the goods would in the end benefit as much as the man who makes them.

The alterations of arrangements Messrs. Johnson found advisable were, firstly, the abolition of the breakfast hour ; and secondly, that the reduction of time should take place in the morning. Like most firms, they had experienced considerable loss through morning irregularity. If masters like to live in a fool's paradise and imagine themselves terribly injured by a non-observance of arbitrary and unreasonable laws, and by an unnatural state of things, which is really the case as regards early morning work, then they must expect to suffer. Nevertheless it is very foolish. Further, if a proper examination were made into the true cost and value of work turned out before eight a.m., it is probable that many employers would open their eyes in astonishment. Messrs. Johnson estimated, and have since found it borne out by actual working, that early morning work costs 50 per cent. more than similar work done in the normal time. This is a most important point. Messrs. Johnson further considered that the getting ready for breakfast and for work again afterwards was quite equal to a loss of fifteen minutes. Then, and it was a wise thought too, it occurred to them that the way to a man's heart for work, as for other things, was through his digestive organs, and that coming early in a morning, probably without having eaten anything, was not conducive to satisfactory work. By commencing at eight a.m. the workers did not come, as before, with an empty stomach. Under the old system there was also the question of lighting up on winter mornings and

further consequent loss of time. This was now saved, and there was also a saving on the morning expenses by machinery not being run when the work turned out was only 50 per cent. of its normal value, as well as many other points that practical men will readily perceive.

Therefore Messrs. Johnson concluded that by granting eight hours, and at the same time being sure of getting in all their men punctually at eight instead of expecting to get them in at six o'clock, they would probably get as much work in eight as previously in nine hours. They also further point out that to many of the men living some distance away, half a mile or more, the earlier hour meant that to get to their breakfast between eight and eight-thirty there must be a run home and a run back again, as well as a probably insufficient and ill-digested meal. Here we see a little regard to higher motives, and we also shall see that from the lowest standpoint it has paid. And it must be obvious that when the starting time is a reasonable one, and one before which a man has had time to get a decent meal, and his wife, too, shall have had a reasonable opportunity for getting it ready in time, the net results might be expected to prove satisfactory.

But what, it may be asked, was the result of their first three months' working? There were only two cases of men being behind time. Whilst this standard has not been entirely maintained, the regularity of attendance has been quite satisfactory. It should be stated that Messrs. Johnson have seen fit to grant this concession by only allowing the forty-eight hours when no time was "lost." This is regrettable in one sense. As taught at school, the writer would rather put a man on his honour than make useless restrictions of the above nature. Whilst there are no doubt

exceptions, the working-class as a whole can be trusted, and probably most fines and restrictions do not work permanent good. In fact, as will be seen from the cases quoted in connection with the experiments of the writer's firm, in which no restrictions have been imposed, on the whole as satisfactory results as those just named have been obtained, that is, as to good time being kept.

After all, Robert Owen's is a good principle to go upon. He was once being taken through a factory by the owner, who said: "If my men were careful they could save me £4,000 a year." "Then," replied Owen, "why don't you pay them £2,000 a year to do it and pocket the rest?" Matters must not be all on one side, as is now too often expected.

Messrs. Johnson paid their men, with the foregoing restrictions as to keeping time, the same wages for forty-eight as they had previously done for fifty-four hours, viz. 40s. 6d. to 42s. 9d. per week for moulders and machinists. Their firm conviction is that the eight hours day must come, and great credit is due to them for their wise and humane action.

### § 2. *Questions and Answers.*

The following are the questions put by the writer, and Messrs. Johnson's replies.

11th February, 1892.

#### EIGHT HOURS QUESTION.

1. Has there been any increase in cost of production?
2. Is the change appreciated by the workmen?
3. Do you think a more intelligent interest is now taken in the work?
4. Are there any incidental savings by the shorter hours,

such as better supervision by the foremen? If any other incidental advantages, please name them.

5. Is it your impression that as much or less work is turned out by the men in the eight and a half as in the nine hours?

6. Is the morning attendance the same or better than before the introduction of the alteration? If possible give data on this point.

7. Do you consider that reduced hours of labour here would enable manufacturers on the Continent whose men work longer hours to compete with us on better terms?

Messrs. Johnson answered :—

“ 1. They found no increase in cost of production, but on the contrary a decrease.

“ 2. It is much appreciated by the men, their zeal and efforts show it has given the greatest satisfaction.

“ 3. *We have a more intelligent set of men.*

“ 4. There are many incidental savings by shorter hours.

“ 5. We get out more work.

“ 6. Also more time being afforded to the men and lads to improve themselves, they attend technical classes in the evening. Messrs. Johnson consider that the workers secure a good two hours extra for recreation and improvement.

“ 7. The cost of production is not increased, and from our experience of Continental workmen we do not think they, working longer hours, could hold their own with our men working shorter ones.”

These replies are of the utmost value, and this one fact that the men are, in consequence of having more time, trying to improve themselves, is in itself alone most gratifying and important.

### § 3. *Messrs. Brunner, Mond and Co.*

Messrs. Brunner, Mond and Co. of Northwich, a firm in a very large way of business, whose extraordinary success in chemical manufactures is so well known, have kindly answered the writer's inquiries as to the effect of the introduction of the eight hours system into their works. Whilst this industry is of a totally different nature to that last quoted, still it is an example of the great benefit of the change from long to short hours. In their case the change was from twelve to eight hours, their men previously working continuously seven days a week for twelve hours per shift, with one shift of twenty-two hours long every fortnight. This seems work with a vengeance, though no doubt its intermittent nature to some extent modified the effects of such long hours. They reduced it to eight hours, and the managing director says: "We have never had any reason to regret the change. To the men it has been the greatest boon. It has had the most material effect in improving their health and decreasing the amount of drunkenness, which before the adoption of the system was very great indeed. The interference of the police is not called for now as it used to be."

This is a startling instance of the fact that overwork, now too often existing, produces crime, costing the nation hard cash to look after that crime. Here is positive evidence that the bane of this country, drunkenness, can to some extent be traced to the inhuman hours of labour often imposed. Therefore if an eight hours system will encourage the most rational antidote to drunkenness, self-respect, surely a trial would in many ways be found to pay. In face

of the above reliable evidence, how much of the enormous drink bill of this country, amounting last year to over 142 millions, might have been reduced. No wonder that with the long hours now so often existing a man is led into drinking habits. This is only another proof that if the workers gain more leisure they would appreciate it. The writer has often heard it said : "Give them more leisure and they will only frequent the beerhouse the more." Here is evidence directly opposed to this unfair statement.

#### *§ 4. The Sheffield Gas Company and the Huddersfield Tramways.*

Another company, with which the writer happens to be associated, the Sheffield Gas Company, has reduced its hours of labour to eight. It is difficult to ascertain the exact effect owing to the special nature of the business, but the change has been much appreciated by the workers.

Another instance, the Huddersfield Corporation Tramways, may be cited. As is well known, tramway work necessitates long hours, but as now existing they are far too long, in fact simply inhuman. An instance very near Sheffield shows that tramway men have been working thirteen and fourteen hours a day.

The manager of the Huddersfield Tramways, Mr. Pogson, some months ago suggested to the Corporation Tramways Committee that it was desirable to increase the service to sixteen hours. The time being then already too long, the Committee wisely consented to an experiment which has been an unqualified success, viz. the introduction of two shifts of men. Formerly the trams ran fourteen hours per day, and the men worked twelve hours (two hours off).

Under the new system two shifts are employed, each working an eight hours day. The manager states that by the change he has, in the first place, obtained a good reserve of experienced hands in case of emergency, and that the work is certainly done better. He also adds that he considers the long hours usually worked on tramways are simply disgraceful, and one can heartily agree with him on this point.

The wages previous to the alteration were, drivers 32s., conductors 23s. per week, based on a twelve hours actual working day. Now they stand at 26s. and 21s. per day of eight hours. In other words, the advance on the old rate per hour has been 25 per cent. and 50 per cent. respectively. Here is another of those proofs that long hours often mean not only positive degradation to the human being enslaved by them, but proportionately lower wages too. They may not necessarily be twin brothers, but they seem always in uncommonly close propinquity. No doubt other conditions have also to be taken in mind, but the world can always take care of itself, and we are not likely to find incompetent men ever getting high wages for short hours. By giving more leisure time you will get a better class of men, as Messrs. Johnson found, who will make themselves worth the higher wages. But in the writer's opinion it will never be found in our day and generation that competent men will work long hours for low wages. Fortunately that time has passed away once and for all. .

It is very gratifying to see that the London County Council do not intend to allow a continuance of long hours on tramways in the metropolis, and propose to stipulate that no new privileges for further lines be granted to Tramway Companies without a guarantee that the men shall not

be worked more than ten hours per day. Why not follow the example of the Huddersfield Corporation?

§ 5. *Messrs. William Allan and Co.*

Information respecting the recent Sunderland movement may be of special interest. The following letter from Mr. Allan again proves that a pound of practice is worth a ton of theory.

“SCOTIA ENGINE WORKS, SUNDERLAND,  
“February 26th, 1892.

“DEAR SIR,

“Your favour received, and I beg to reply to queries *seriatim*:

“1. So far as I can judge from the books and wages bill, I believe the cost of production will be less than formerly.

“2. The men are all in favour of the change and exhibit what I would call a healthier tone, so much so that we have had no ‘sleepers in’ since the new system was adopted.

“3. and 4. In fact the change is so much appreciated by all that the results will be in favour of an employer. The foremen are all at their posts regularly so that the work goes on briskly.

“5. Paradoxical as it may seem, I *get fully more work out* than formerly; in fact I am surprised at how the work is going ahead, having believed—like so many employers—that there would be a corresponding decrease in output. *This is a fallacy*, as the human machine when in good order and contented can do more work than when otherwise.

“6. Foreign competition is a ‘bogie.’ Long hours do not mean greater output or lessened cost, else we would be importing coals from Germany, &c. In some goods, such

as watches, clocks, hurdy-gurdies, &c., &c., it may affect us, but in our staple industries, never—for, while they have conscription abroad, our young fellows are getting inured to the hammer and chisel instead of the rifle, so we thereby produce better workers.

“I feel sure all adopting the eight hours system will be in pocket by the change.

“I have given you my views from results and observations and have no reason whatever to regret the change. To me it is really astonishing how my old views are demolished and fears dissipated by the new order of things.

“Yours truly,

“WM. ALLAN.”

Since writing the above Mr. Allan has (June, 1892) advanced the wages of his workmen 5 per cent. without being asked. This is a very practical proof of how well a shorter day pays him. For further details of a most interesting character, see Appendix, p. 171.

#### § 6. *Messrs. Short.*

The writer also received the following letter from Messrs. Short Brothers, shipbuilders, of Sunderland.

“*Sunderland, Feb. 26th, 1892.*

“GENTLEMEN,

“In reply to yours of the 25th inst., we have as you know only worked on the eight hours since the 4th January, but from our short experience I can answer your first question by saying we are satisfied it will *not* increase the cost of production.

“2. The men appreciate the change.

“3. Yes, but slight, as we have not felt the full benefit of the shorter time, being winter months.

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“4. Yes, by the alteration of working hours from 7.30 until 12, and from 12.48 until 5 for the first five days of the week, making only one break for dinner, and because the day's work is divided into two half days instead of quarters. Saturdays from 7.30 until 12.

“5. We have every reason to believe that our production will be *more*.

“6. We scarcely have one absentee under the new arrangement, whereas by the old 20 per cent. of our men lost the first quarter every morning.

“7. My opinion is the long hours which the foreigner works destroy his chance of competing with us in manufacture. Men become dawdlers if compelled to work longer than their physical strength will allow. I believe we can produce at less cost in eight hours than the foreigner (or Englishman) can in *twelve* hours.

“6. (Again). Yes, better organization but no increase in cost through the shorter day.

“I am certain that our new arrangement would be beneficial to the employers as well as to the men, the cost of production will not be increased, and the production will not be reduced.

“I may say *last week* our *wages bill* was *more* than any week during the last year, showing that our men were working better and more regularly.

“The men agreed to accept 5 per cent. reduction on time wages, for those who adopted the new time; but as most of our men are on piece-work, it did not affect them in any way as regards wages.

“Yours faithfully,

“JOHN Y. SHORT.”

With reference to the foregoing case, the writer has had a conversation with Mr. Short, and finds that he in every way endorses the views expressed in his letter.

The number of men working under this change in Sunderland is nearly 2000. Whilst most of these men work piece-work, still the results are none the less encouraging.

#### *§ 7. Hadfield's Steel Foundry Co.*

The writer has some diffidence in referring to the case of his own firm, Hadfield's Steel Foundry Co. When, however, one can speak from actual experience, it seems specially advisable to mention the results. Although much has been said respecting the change at these particular works, his firm does not claim to have applied any very startling change; in fact it is really but a trifling concession. It was, however, deemed advisable to "make haste slowly." Their experiment of shorter hours was commenced some nine months ago. The starting time was made at 6.30 instead of 6 a.m.; in other words, the working hours per day were reduced from nine and a half to nine, or the week's time from fifty-four to fifty-one hours. The change applied to all workers, whether belonging to the Union or not, and the wages remained as before.

That the change has been eminently satisfactory will be seen from the results quoted, for although alterations of method and organization were introduced about the same time, no doubt contributing much to the satisfactory results, still the writer, from many facts that have come under his personal observation, considers that one of the chief factors has been the better tone and morale amongst the men. It is the old tale, that human nature is not irresponsive to

more trust and confidence being placed in it, just as at school when boys are put upon their honour they are generally to be trusted in a much better way than by rules and restrictions. It is the proof of that higher feeling within us which, if properly developed, would help to bring about many changes which certain sections of society are so often belittling.

From 450 to 500 workers have been working under this fifty-one hours per week, comprising engineers, founders, fettlers, smiths, and general labourers. The business in question is that of steel founding, in which there is as much, if not more, competition than in the average specialty trade. Therefore the system has had a fair field and no favour.

What has been the net outcome of the experiment? As far as can be determined, practically the reduced hours have not added to the cost of production. The management on its side has perfected better methods, and the workers on their side have shown more intelligent interest in carrying out the work to be done, the result being that as much work has been done as in the former long hours. The costs show, after carefully comparing the time spent in the same class of work under the old and new systems, that there is little or no appreciable difference between the amount of work turned out per man. One important improvement has been noticed. Taking the comparison haphazard, viz., for the months of January 1891 and 1892, in the former case out of about 500 men seventy-two averaged half an hour late each morning during the month, twenty-two averaged a commencement of work at 9 a.m. In January 1892, the whole of the men, except a daily average of nineteen, were in at work punctually at the starting-time—6.30 a.m. The company has therefore clearly

saved time, which under the old *régime* must have been highly wasteful through absence of the workers and foremen, to say nothing of the demoralization under the old system. About the same percentage is found in the other firms before quoted.

The foundry foremen consider that as far as any comparison can be made, as much work is being turned out (it goes without saying that this is so in piece-work), "and not so many quarters lost." They think that "a moulder can fetch up half an hour without putting himself about." It is no use saying that the men have therefore been previously idling, for it is pretty much the conduct that might have been expected of any of us under the same conditions. The engineering foremen report that owing to the men all starting together, instead of the previous desultory system, much better results are obtained in the work. In fact they consider the same jobs were turned out in less rather than more time, and several cases of this were instanced. Also that the men were making the work more a personal matter; in other words, as the masters showed more interest in them they are showing more interest in the masters' welfare. Similar results are reported from all the departments, while the better supervision of the foremen and the commencement of work with only 4 per cent. of absentees instead of 20 per cent. must in itself be a considerable monetary saving.

I conclude these details of practical experiments by giving time-tables to show how a man's time is made up when working the longer and the shorter day.

## TIME TABLE (A).

Showing approximately the disposal of an artisan's time when working 9 hours per day (54 hours per week).

Commencement of work	6.00						
Stop for breakfast	...	8.30	=	2.30			
Interval ...	...	...	...	...	0.30		
Works from	...	...	9.00				
To	...	...	1.00	=	4.00		
Interval ...	...	...	...	...	1.00		
Works from	...	...	2.00				
To	...	...	5.00	=	3.00		
						9.30	
							1.30 Total Interval.
Days		5					
On Saturday works	...	...	47.30				
			6.30				
					54.00		

To the above add, say ;

Allow for getting up, washing, and to work	...	0.30	
To and from home at dinner	...	...	0.30
Getting home at night	...	...	0.30
Sleep (probable minimum necessary for <i>muscle</i> workers)		1.30	8.00
		9.30	
Sleep	...	...	8.00
Allowance (getting up, washing, to and from work, if he goes home to breakfast)	...	...	1.30
Work	...	...	9.30
Meal intervals (1.30 less 30 m. already allowed) (for getting <i>two</i> meals, no allowance for a third)	...	1.00	
		20.00	

Therefore the worker has left for himself on five of the working days a balance of four hours per day, year in and out, except for cessation of work, meaning stoppage of income. But this leisure makes no allowance for time occupied in evening meal, attending to his own business matters. He has to get his education and recreation in as well.

Special attention is drawn to the fact that should overtime be worked say two hours, the above leisure is consequently reduced 50 per cent. It will be seen from the above how detrimental overtime must prove.

## TIME-TABLE (B).

Showing approximately the disposal of an artisan's time when working 8 hours per day (48 hours per week).

Commencement of Work	7.30				
Work until	...	...	12.30	=	5.00
Interval ...	...	...	...	...	1.00 <sup>1</sup>
Works from	...	...	1.30		
To	...	...	5.00	=	3.30
					<hr/>
			8.30		1.00 Total Interval.
		Days	5		
					<hr/>
On Saturday works	...	...	42.30		
			5.00		<hr/>
			47.30		<hr/>

With the above he would get on five days

Sleep	...	...	8.00		
Work	...	...	8.30		
Interval	...	...	1.00		<hr/>
					<hr/>
Allowance	...	...	17.30		
			1.30		<hr/>
			19.00		<hr/>

This leaves a leisure of 5 hours per day.

Under the above system there is only one stop, and the worker has before coming had reasonable time for breakfast.

<sup>1</sup> If say 1½ hrs. (instead of 1 hour) for dinner = 46½ hours per week.

## TIME-TABLE (C).

Showing how the total hours per week are made up.

	Actual working hours on ordinary days.	Actual working hours on Saturday.	Total working hours per week.
Present system of 54 hours per week	...	9.30	6.30 = 54
Modified as now worked at Hadfield Steel Foundry Company	...	9.00	6.00 = 51
Proposed 8 hours system (48 per week)	...	8.30	5.00 = 47½
The restrictive 8 hours day (44 per week)	...	8.00	4.00 = 44

### § 9. *Various Examples.*

In conclusion, reference should be made to another firm in Sheffield which has very generously seen its way to adopt the eight hours system—the Sheffield Smelting Company, Limited. Other successful examples of working are quoted in Mr. Sydney Webb's book, amongst them being Messrs. Burroughes, Welcome & Co., manufacturing chemists, Caslon & Co., typefounders, the Proprietors of the *London Star*, and Mr. Mark Beaufoy, M.P. The following extract from the *Daily News* of February 1st, 1892, gives another example of how little a shorter working day injures the interests of employers—

“ The London General Omnibus Company's annual meeting yesterday was on the whole encouraging, though it was not altogether free from signs of discontent. The chairman was able to say that, but for the exceptional dearth of pro-vender, he would have had to announce the usual dividend of ten per cent. This seems to show that the Company is still able to live, though it lets live, in larger measure, by giving better wages and shorter hours to the men. The strike, in fact, has not permanently dislocated the omnibus business. Everybody must wish that the momentary cause of depression may soon disappear. The Company has dealt liberally with the public, as well as with its own work-people—some of its shareholders believe a little too liberally in the former case. The fares have certainly “ touched bottom,” yet the most experienced judges think that, in view of railway competition, it would be imprudent to raise them. Low fares, high wages, and a high dividend—

philanthropy, in fact, and ten per cent., may, we trust, prove a not unattainable ideal in this branch of enterprise."

Once more, then, the conclusion seems forced upon us that, after all, a shorter working day will not be such a dreadful thing as some suppose.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### OVERTIME AND THE UNEMPLOYED.

[R. A. H. and H. DE B. G.]

John Burns on Overtime—Australian Experience—The Australian Strikes of 1890—The Unemployed—Overtime—Irregularity of Work—Early Hours—How to obtain a Shorter Working Day—Parliamentary Action—Need of more Trades Unionism.

#### § 1. *John Burns on Overtime.*

WE have put these two words together at the head of the chapter, because in the minds of the advocates of the Eight Hours Question they are closely connected as cause and effect, and it is imagined that if they succeed in abolishing the one they will also succeed in abolishing the other. We have already remarked, that one of the chief arguments for a shorter working day, urged by the leaders of the working-classes themselves, is that it will give work to the unemployed. This was very clearly stated by Mr. John Burns, at a speech he delivered in Battersea, on September 21st, 1890. He remarked: “I am in favour of the eight hours day for many reasons, but principally on account of the workless. I will now give you some facts which will astonish you, and make you open your eyes pretty widely. In March, 1887, the Government instituted an inquiry into the poverty of the unemployed in four districts in London,

—Battersea was one of the four—and they found that out of 29,460 questioned, 8,008, or 27 per cent., were out of work ; 5,964 had been out for twelve weeks, and 15,505 or  $5\frac{3}{4}$  per cent., for six months ; 500 were physically unable to work, and 200 were disabled. The average weekly wage of those who were fortunate enough to be in work was 24s. 7d., and the average rental 6s. 2d., the rent and wages being an average of 1 to 4. The average rent of those out of work was 4s. 8d. ; 7s. 5d. being paid by clerks, 4s. 5d. by dock labourers, and costers 5s. od., or a third of their income of 15s. 4d. 59 per cent., or 16,000 of the 29,451, lived in three rooms, 21 per cent. lived in two rooms, 17 per cent. in one room, and 3 per cent. shared a room with others. 50 and 46 per cent. respectively of the total dock labourers and costermongers had a single room or part of a room to accommodate themselves, their wives and families. The percentages out of work in trades were : dock labourers 55, labourers 37, shipwrights 44, masons 37, painters 33, carpenters 27, seamen, watermen, bakers, butchers, blacksmiths and coopers 25 ; policemen, postmen, sorters, and railway servants 2 to 6. For six months out of work for the same period there were : dock labourers 89 per cent., masons and bricklayers 79, painters 72, bootmakers, tailors, shipwrights, labourers, costermongers, and cabinet-makers 60, postmen, railway servants, and Government employés under 10 per cent.” The speaker then continued : “ I want now to draw your attention to the number of hours men worked who were employed at Woolwich, Enfield, and other Government workshops between the years 1884 and 1886, or two years and two months, during the time so many were out of work. I find that 12,000 men worked 6,000,000 hours overtime—

or an average for each man of seventeen hours per week. If the Government had had the good sense to do what it ought to have done, it would have given employment to 2,000 skilled and unskilled workers for two years by abolishing overtime. There are engineers who have worked fourteen, sixteen, and eighteen hours a day for three months at a stretch, while 10 per cent. of that body were unable to find work, and their union—the strongest in the world—has been powerless to stop overtime, or to regulate piecework, besides getting an eight hour day. And 20 per cent. of the labourers were in the same predicament; and it is because I firmly believe that a legal eight hours day will remedy all this and also stop overtime, that I am so strongly in favour of it, as a relief to the overworked, and as helping the unemployed."

### § 2. *Australian Experiences.*

The above words show the strong belief that the shortening of the working day will produce more work for those who are now without it. Possibly this might be the case theoretically, but as a matter of fact it has not been so practically; and before discussing the question of overtime by itself, we may at once proceed to look at what have been the actual facts of the case in Australia, where the eight hours system has, as we know, been long in force. There the shortening of the working day has by no means settled the question of the unemployed, for it is a problem which troubles the Australian social reformer as much as it troubles the English. In fact, so large did the numbers of the unemployed actually become, that it was felt by the Australian working-classes that stringent steps were necessary to with-

stand the competition which was always ready to take the place of the Unionist labourer at times of industrial conflict. The growth of the New Unionism in Australia is simply the record of a long struggle against the unemployed.

The facts of the case historically are these :<sup>1</sup> After the first Factory Acts had been passed, women and children who found themselves excluded from the work in factories, or who, by their position in life, were compelled to perform some kind of manual labour, found themselves to a large extent out of employment. Added to them was the large body of unskilled labourers, whom the contractor or employer could not take under the rate of wages fixed by the Trades Unions, without serious loss, as their work was not worth the wages given. People like these, both men and women, naturally sought employment where they could, and formed, and still do form, a large class of unskilled labour, who are always ready to take low wages and work long hours in order to gain a bare livelihood. Thus it was, that all the evils which are so prominent in the industrial life of older countries, such as England and the Continental States, appeared once more in the new world of Australia. The sweating system has become, since 1882, as firmly rooted in Melbourne, Adelaide, and Brisbane, as in the East End of London. The feeblest individuals are compelled to become its victims by the inexorable force of circumstances, and instead of raising their standard of comfort, they have to lower it as deeply as possible, in order to live at all ; while at the least depression of trade they are thrown into the helpless ranks of the unemployed.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bauer, *Arbeiterfragen*, and also the *Economic Journal* of September, 1892.

*§ 3. The Australian Strikes of 1890.*

The Australian Labour Party did not take long to perceive the full seriousness of the situation, and in the year 1885 the movement against the sweating system was actively set on foot. The same year saw the birth of what is called the New Unionism, that is to say, the movement for the formation of Trades Unionism amongst the unskilled, as distinguished from the skilled labourers. The distinct object of the New Unionism was to bring pressure to bear upon non-Unionist workmen, in order to force them to obey the rules of the Trades Councils, in spite of any theoretical arguments about freedom of contract. For the theory of free contract was met by the New Unionist with the argument, that an individual who accepts lower wages and a lower standard of comfort than the one fixed by his fellow-workmen, was compelling these latter to come down to his level, and was thereby damaging the community as a whole. But this argument was by no means acceptable to the employers, who insisted upon what they called freedom of contract, and who formed in Victoria an Association in order to found a strike fund, and to oppose the representatives of the Unionists. In 1890 the conflict between the employers and the unemployed on the one hand, and the members of the Trades Unions on the other, came to a crisis, and that because it was found after all (even in a country where an eight hours day was legally enforced) that the question of the unemployed had not been solved.

The history of the great Australian strikes of 1890 is merely the history of a desperate attempt, on the part of the New Unionism, to fight against economic forces over which

they had as yet no control ; and which were unfortunately personified for them in the persons of the "Free Labour" men, or in other words, of the workless. It is not necessary to give a full history of this strike in order to prove our contention, that an eight hours day does not solve the unemployed problem ; but we may refer briefly to its main outlines. The first trouble came from the sheep-shearers, who had not long before formed a Union amongst themselves, chiefly to resist the downward tendency of wages. The squatters of Darling Downs in return determined to employ exclusively non-Union shearers. Then the battle began. The leaders of the Trades Unions in Queensland arranged with the dock labourers that all bales of wool not stamped with the Shearers' Trades Union mark should not be loaded on board any ship, and this boycotting of wool sheared by non-Unionist workmen caused a complete collapse of the shipping industry for a couple of months. After the Trades Council had declared the boycott, there followed a strike of dock labourers, which had special reasons of its own, and in which the foremen joined. From the docks the strike penetrated into the ranks of the gasworkers, and on the advice of the Trades Council they refused to use coals which had been handled by non-Unionist workmen. Thus the strike of gas-stokers broke out, and for two nights the streets of Melbourne were plunged in darkness, and the machinery of several industrial establishments was brought to a standstill. The Gas Company, however, by paying £1 a day to good workmen, were able to tide over their difficulties, and employers called a Pan-Australian Conference at Sydney, which was followed by a similar conference of Trades Unions ; but all attempts to bring about an understanding between the two conferences failed. The Unions now

brought out all the hewers in the coal-mines of New South Wales, but coal was sent over from Japan and England, and the employers once again got the better of their men. Finally, all the wool-shearers belonging to the Unions were brought out on strike, and with this the means of the Unionists were exhausted. This last move was proved to be a failure, because there were quite as many wool-shearers outside the Trades Unions as in them, and the collapse of the Unionists of Australia was complete. They were not able, in fact, to fight their employers successfully, because there were so many unemployed outside their ranks who were only too glad to get work at any terms.

#### § 4. *The Unemployed.*

In fact, as Mr. John Rae has remarked in dealing with this question, the eight hours day has not succeeded, in Australia, in solving any of the problems which it has been fondly hoped that it would solve. "Look for the effects of it where you will, they still ever elude your observation ; wages have not fallen, wages have not risen ; production has not fallen, excepting in certain trifling cases, and prices have not risen, except again in certain trifling instances ; *the unemployed have not vanished*, not so much as shrunk in any perceptible degree ; the working-classes have an hour more to call their own—and that is all." This is a conclusion which a calm survey of the facts brings home to us : the eight hours day brings its own reward and its own advantages to a certain extent, but it does not and cannot solve difficulties which have their root in the whole economic basis of industrial life. And even if a shorter working day did absorb into the ranks of those now at work the numbers

of the unemployed, it does not follow (as we have already pointed out) that they would remain in work for very long, for the consideration of their inefficiency has to be taken into account. After all, look at it as we may, the fact remains that there are a large number of inefficient workmen in the world of industry. Whether they are inefficient from their own fault, or from external influences over which they have had no control; whether they are so from sheer physical inability to do good work, brought on by insanitary surroundings and unhealthy bringing up; or whether from disinclination to regular employment, which is often an effect of these conditions, we cannot discuss here. The fact remains that there are inefficient workmen, and as longs as this class exists, the question of the unemployed will be always with us.

### § 5. *Overtime.*

Of course it is clear from what we have just said, that a shorter working day and the abolition of overtime will not do what is expected of it, but at the same time we may frankly admit that the amount of overtime worked at the present is rather an evil than otherwise. In many cases it could no doubt be avoided; and indeed in many cases it is actually avoided, at any rate, to some extent, because it has been made illegal by Act of Parliament. In the existing Factory Acts in England the question of overtime in various industries is dealt with in the greatest detail, and in the vast majority of textile factories overtime is absolutely prohibited; yet, as Messrs. Webb and Cox aptly remark in their chapter on this subject, "the textile industries of England are perhaps, commercially, the most important in

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the country, and they are certainly the most sensitive to foreign competition." If these trades can live and thrive under such rigid regulations, there is at least a presumption that the numerous exceptions for overtime allowed to other trades are not all of them necessary. Moreover, even from an employer's point of view, overtime and long hours are often even in the ordinary way not economical. This may seem rather a strange saying to some employers, but in the face of the examples we have already given of the evil effects of long hours and the good effects of short ones, it can hardly be denied that there is a great deal of truth in it. Indeed, this fact is now being much more freely admitted.

Let the unsolicited testimony of one of the cleverest and best of our shipbuilding engineers in this country speak for itself. The managing director of one of the largest shipbuilding firms in the North of England (Earles), which employs a capital of some half a million sterling, and has 3,000 or 4,000 hands, stated publicly, "that he considered overtime was the curse of the trade." This is a plain matter-of-fact statement, and most masters who know anything about cost of work must admit that it is true. The workmen are often accused of obstinacy in not admitting facts, but this quality seems also to be largely possessed by those who are set in authority over them. The managing director of the firm just mentioned, also pointed out that the firm had paid in one year a quarter of million pounds sterling in wages, but in spite of much overtime and labour troubles, the average increase in the rate of wages had only been one shilling per man. "The men don't work the full number of hours, and I believe," he says, "that our men on the average do not work even the much-talked-of eight hours day." He also pointed out that when the men struck

in the North of England on the question of overtime, it was proved that they did not on the average put in more than a full fifty-three hours per week, in spite of overtime worked.

#### § 6. *Irregularity of Work and Early Hours.*

It therefore would appear that the present supposed length of day is often not actually worked, because there is so much irregularity in the way in which men come to or leave their work, and in that case employers must naturally suffer, when the machinery is running with a large proportion of men absent. This irregularity is likely to continue so long as the present custom of starting at 6 or 6.30 a.m. is kept up. We may here remark, in passing, that it is the early morning hours which take most out of the labourer, but which really produce the least result as regards the quantity of work turned out. The man who rises at 5.30 on a winter's morning without breakfast, and rushes past the time-house door just as the time-keeper shuts the gate, is often not in a fit state to do really satisfactory work. Of course it may be urged that many of the workmen themselves do not object to it, and as a man remarked to one of the present writers, "it's nothing when you get used to it." But probably this getting used to it is accompanied by a good many disadvantages which are not at present considered. The mere accustoming oneself to routine of that description is not conducive to a very high state of mental capacity. And in all seriousness a worker cannot be worth so much to an employer when he starts work at an early hour, at which his state of mind is not conducive either to good quality or large quantity of production. Probably points like these are not realized by many of those who declaim loudly

against any change, but such conditions without doubt are not conducive to economy, because of the poor class of work they tend to promote. The *Engineer*, in an article of December 11th, 1891, on the Sunderland Eight Hours Movement, estimates that by working an eight hours day, commencing at 8.0 a.m., men would probably keep much better time; and the practical experience of Messrs. Johnson and Co., quoted above, page 140, agrees with this supposition.

In fact this journal goes so far as to state, that though the men were themselves asked to take 5 per cent. reduction of wages, at the same time they could easily get back 3 per cent.; and when the matter has got thus far, there seems strong hope that both sides will discover points of such mutual advantage, that the movement will rapidly spread, both among employers and employed.

Finally, in speaking of the value of overtime it must not be forgotten that men generally work then under bad supervision. Probably overtime from five to seven is only worth some 80 per cent. of the normal, which with the time and a quarter charges equals an increase in cost to the employer of some 50 per cent. over the normal. When time and a half rates are in force the cost is probably 70 to 80 per cent. in excess of the normal, to say nothing of the inferior quality of the work. In other words, if overtime is of regular occurrence, it would really pay to increase plant and employ more men, which is what the workers wish.

Yet another point may be mentioned. If overtime in each class of trade were *uniform* throughout the country it would be a blessing to many employers. As any one knows who has opportunities of hearing tenders read out at Board Meetings, it is astonishing how great are the variations met with. In a recent case given in the public papers some

seventeen tenders were received for certain work where a specification existed, and the amounts varied from £1,438 to £6,300. One cannot avoid the conclusion that in some cases part of these differences are owing to variations in wage-rates. Therefore the sooner more uniformity, both in wages and overtime rates, exists, the better for all concerned.

It is exceedingly doubtful whether overtime can be entirely abolished. It exists in those parts of Australia where the eight hours system is in force. Even in those countries where a limit is put to the hours of labour that limit is very high : in Australia twelve, in France twelve, and in Switzerland eleven hours. No doubt in some classes of trade, such as the miners', the difficulty would not be so great ; therefore let each class decide for itself. Drastic legislation would certainly be unwise. "Make haste slowly" in this matter should be the motto, but there cannot be the slightest objection to full and free discussion of the whole subject. There is, however, no precedent to condemn restrictive legislation, but the contrary, as many Statutes testify. Nor has the country in consequence gone to the dogs. If Factory Acts were requisite for preservation of bodily health, surely, owing to the great changes in the surroundings of our citizens, there is much to be urged on behalf of some further restrictive legislation in this matter.

#### *§ 7. How to obtain a Shorter Day.*

The question remains, By what means is an eight hours day to be obtained ? and here we have already a great controversy between those who believe in voluntary effort on the part of the working-classes themselves, and those who look to the action of the State. It may be an interesting

subject for an economic theorist to debate as to how far the State may interfere with the rights of individuals, and it is still more interesting for the practical man to notice in how many cases the State has already interfered ; but it is not our purpose to discuss theoretically whether the voluntary or the State method is the best means of obtaining what is wanted. We prefer to point out what seems the most obvious and practical conclusion of the whole matter. In the first place, as the old proverb says, "God helps those who help themselves," which in this case means, that if the working-classes really wish to have an eight hours day, they must obtain it by their own efforts. They could easily do so. If only as much self-denial and energy were shown by them as is shown by the members of the Salvation Army, the Eight Hours Movement would become an accomplished fact before very many months were over. But as a matter of fact, the working-class do not yet seem to know their own minds, and certainly they are not united upon the question. Although there is without the least doubt a general desire, and a kind of inarticulate craving for a reduction of the hours of labour, there is not yet (excepting in the case of the miners) a definite and distinct demand made, and consequently very little energy, and no self-denial at all, is shown by those who say they wish to shorten the hours of work. How far the working-class are from being united upon this point, may be seen from the digest of evidence given before the Labour Commission and published on July 20th, 1892. From this evidence we see that the officials of the trades unions in the textile trades are, as is pretty well known, dead against any legislative restrictions on hours of labour, and so too are the representatives of the Dundee jute trade. On the other hand, the London Rope-

makers' Union pronounce strongly in its favour. But again, even from the mining districts, there come two dissentient voices. The representatives of the Durham district were against the Eight Hours Bill, and they were followed by the representatives of the enginemen in the Hanley district. Mr. J. Troyn, speaking for the Cleveland district, was emphatic in his opposition to the shorter day, while the evidence given by men from Northumberland was quite contradictory. From South Wales, however, the unions were unanimous in favour of eight hours, and the same opinion was expressed by the North Wales quarry-men, whilst the representatives of the Fife and Ross districts of Scotland would support an Eight Hours Bill. Now until the working-classes are entirely unanimous upon the point, as to whether they want an eight hours day or not, it is pretty clear that they will not make much headway ; on the other hand, if they really desire to reduce their hours of labour, it would be very easy for them to do so, by means of Parliamentary agitation and legal enactments. The total electorate of the country numbered at the last election (July, 1892) exactly 6,161,546, or in round numbers, just over 6,000,000 out of a total population of about 38,000,000. Mr. Gladstone estimates that, upon a re-adjustment of registration, the electorate of the nation would rise to some 7,000,000, and of these 7,000,000 the majority certainly belong to the working-classes. The results of the July elections of 1892 in districts where the working-class, and especially the mining vote, was strong, showed pretty clearly that the working-classes could return an eight hours man in constituencies where they had really made up their minds to do so. There is therefore no reason why, when they have made up their minds throughout the country,

they should not make the eight hours day a test question for candidates for Parliament. We suppose it is too much to hope that a strong and united Labour party will be formed in the House of Commons for some time to come, as, judging by the light of the past, the working-classes have almost invariably allowed themselves to be led away from matters which concern them most closely, to others of quite secondary importance, such as Home Rule, and the Dis-establishment of the National Church. But if they really made up their minds to put aside questions which do not concern them very intimately, and to ask plainly and unitedly for a shorter working day, there is not the least doubt, with the present constitution of the English Parliament, that they would be sure to get what they wanted. They have the majority at the pôlls, and they might just as well use it. Why they have not made their power felt hitherto, in a more direct manner, is a matter which they could no doubt best explain themselves ; though possibly an explanation may be supplied to them, in the fact that hitherto they have never had a really determined leader, but have been so far blinded by party politics as to be gulled by the unscrupulous promises made by ministers in search of a majority.

#### *§ 8. Need of more Trades Unionism.*

It is well however to remember, that although Parliamentary action may go a long way, and though legislation may be introduced which would shorten the working day in certain cases, a sudden and drastic measure enforcing an eight hours day upon all trades and occupations alike, without distinction, would probably be such an utter failure as to bring about its own ruin. We have already seen that

even in Australia, where the working-classes, a large proportion of the upper classes, and many members of the Colonial Governments, are in favour of the eight hours day, nevertheless that length of day is not universal, does not apply to all trades, and is so far inoperative that the sweating system flourishes as much as in other countries. Now, in Australia the working-classes are politically and morally much stronger than they are in England; their unions are more powerful, and the labour party has a distinct voice in Colonial politics. If with all these advantages they cannot make an eight hours day universal, it is hopeless to attempt it in England. In this country we shall have to proceed slowly, and the shorter day must be gained gradually trade by trade. Even then there must be a great increase of strength in the various trades unions, if they are to make a successful endeavour to reduce the hours of labour in their particular trade without incurring serious loss and probable defeat. Nothing is so disastrous, and nothing so embittering as industrial strife. The war between employer and employed is one of the most terrible of conflicts; yet disastrous and terrible as it is, such a war must inevitably occur when Trades Unions seek to gain their objects by what is termed voluntary action, unless they are strong enough to show from the outset that any resistance to their demands would practically cause more loss than it is worth. At present the trades unions are not strong enough to show this. After all the efforts made recently by the new unionism, trades unions are swamped by the unemployed. Out of all the millions of working-men in this country, not more than two millions belong to any trades union.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Howell, *Trade Unionism, New and Old*, p. 212. This is a high estimate.

Until therefore the ranks of the unions include a far larger proportion of the working-classes than they do at present, we believe that any attempt to win a shorter working day by "voluntary action," or, in other words, by the bellicose, rough-and-ready, and expensive method of strikes, is foredoomed to failure. If a (so-called) universal strike failed ignominiously in Australia where the forces of Labour are supposed to be strongest, *à fortiori* will a universal strike fail in England. We doubt, indeed, whether it would even be attempted, and we sincerely hope it will not—at any rate until at least three-quarters of the working-classes of Great Britain are staunch members of their respective trades unions. The best and surest method of winning a shorter day, if a real desire for a shorter day exists, is firstly to strengthen the ranks of Trade Unionism throughout the country, then to develop a real and independent Labour Party in the House of Commons, and all the time to make the votes of labouring men felt to some purpose at the polling booth in every constituency and at every election.

## APPENDIX I.

### THE EIGHT HOURS LABOUR DAY: HOW IT OPERATES AT THE SCOTIA ENGINE WORKS.

*[From the "Newcastle Daily Chronicle," Sept. 7th, 1892.]*

WE have it on proverbial authority that a small amount of example is equivalent to a very much larger bulk of precept. From this premise it ought to be safe to reason that a small experiment in the carrying out of a principle is equally as valuable as a vast amount of agitation to the same end. In other words, an actual test of the eight hours day should be as valuable as much speculation as to how it would work when put into operation. While saying this much, we are perfectly well aware that an isolated test of the application of a theory may yield altogether different results to those which would accrue were the theory put into universal practice. The eight hours day has, however, been tested. It has had what must be considered a fair test in the case in which it is in operation. And it has proved a success. The readers of this journal are perfectly familiar with the fact that the system has been in operation for some time at the engine works so successfully owned and managed by Mr. Wm. Allan, at Sunderland; neither are they strangers to the fact that the working of the scheme at that establish-

ment has been already pronounced a marked success. The nine hours concession was fought for and won in this North-Eastern district ; the eight hours agitation, we believe, had its birth in this part of the kingdom ; and it has been left for a northern employer of labour, loyally backed up by his men, to make the first experiment in the solution of the new labour problem. Some weeks ago the *Chronicle* gave an account of how the system had worked in Mr. Allan's establishment. It has now had a longer test, and while the Parliament of Labour is engaged in discussing this important subject at Glasgow, it appears to be an opportune time to give a few additional facts relating to the working of the system at the Scotia Engine Works. With this view a special correspondent of the *Chronicle* has been making inquiries of Mr. Allan and his men. At the early hour—journalistically speaking—of half-past nine in the morning, we found Mr. Allan in his office, where he had already opened and replied to all his morning letters, and was ready for other routine business of the day.

#### *Why the Eight Hours System was adopted.*

Our correspondent, in his interview, sought to obtain information as to the working of the eight hours system at the Scotia Engine Works, and we propose to let Mr. Allan speak of it in his own graphic language. Asked whether he adopted the eight hours system as an experiment or from conviction that it would be an ultimate success, Mr. Allan said : “ I adopted the eight hours first because, under the old system, where the men started work at six o'clock and worked till 8.30 in the morning, or what is called a quarter, this short morning division of the day, as I would call it,

was so much taken advantage of by the men and the lads for 'sleeping in' that the actual time wrought throughout the week by men and boys, on a fair average, was something like forty-six to forty-eight hours per week. Apart from the irregularities thus engendered in time-keeping, machines standing, waste of gas, coal, oil, and wages paid to men who, by reason of certain sleepers-in, could not be profitably employed, such as labourers in the boiler-yard, it followed that, to overtake the loss thus caused, overtime had to be worked. Thinking over the whole question and the best mode of overcoming these irregularities and losses, I came to the conclusion that an eight hours day would be more satisfactory to myself as well as to the men. Besides, I had also in view the fact that by an eight hours day, commencing at 7.30 in the morning, it would be more beneficial to the men and the lads on physical grounds. Men who worked overtime could not be expected to keep regular time in the morning. Growing lads who went to night-classes or places of amusement could not be expected to turn out in the early morning. Hence it seemed to me the only successful way to ensure regularity in time-keeping, less possibility of losses, and better physical conditions for men and lads was to commence at 7.30 in the morning, and have only one break in the day, thus getting a full forty-eight hours' work in the week. For those reasons I was induced, with the approval of the men, to commence an eight hours day, agreeing with them that if the experiment proved itself a success in six months the wages which they agreed to forego—five per cent.—should be returned to them at the end of that time."

*How it has Worked.*

"It must be borne in mind that in the management of an engineering factory, if the books are properly kept, the cost of each detail of an engine, and an engine as a whole, can be had at any moment, and be compared with other engines whether finished under a ten, nine, or eight hours day. Hence six months' trial was long enough to determine the labour cost of the engines finished under the new system as against the old. Therefore, from our costs, taken out very carefully and compared with similar engines fitted under the ten, nine, and eight hours day, we found, much to our surprise, and paradoxical as it may seem, that the cost of the engines was in no way increased, in fact, if anything, rather decreased. It became, therefore, a duty to return to the men the wages which they sacrificed at the initiation of the system, as there has been *no diminution of output in the slightest degree*—rather the contrary. Our reason for that is simply this: that the men and lads are in better physical condition, and they lose no time now, while the machines are kept constantly going by the same men for a straight spin of  $8\frac{3}{4}$  hours for four days of the week,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  hours for another day, and  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours on Saturdays, overtime, unless in special instances, being thus dispensed with. Should it be necessary for us to work a night shift our night shift has been formulated on what we consider the best productive hours of a man's labour. Our night shift is from 5 p.m. to 9.15 p.m.—when the night-shift men take tea—and from 9.30 p.m. to 1.15 a.m. This period we consider to be the best that can be got out of the human machine for night work, as it enables a man to get home and go to bed by half-past one in the morning. If it became absolutely necessary to

work another shift we could commence it at 1.15 in the morning and work till 7.30, when the day shift comes on."

*A "Trade Option" Enactment.*

Asked whether he favoured a legislative enactment to secure the eight hours, Mr. Allan said, "In reply to that question, I would, Scotch-like, ask another. Has it ever been known that an employer of labour has voluntarily raised his men's wages or reduced their hours of labour? In my experience of over forty years, in various quarters of the world, I have never yet found it, unless in one or two instances. The men by their unions have had to fight and strike for every concession that they at present enjoy. But they are now sensible of the fact that strikes are practically a barbarism—a misery-producing, disease-engendering, home-wrecking system. Therefore they are determined, as capital will not listen to their just demands, to enforce, through their Parliamentary representatives, an eight hours day by law. I cannot blame them in this. I have seen too often the evils of strikes, the ill-feeling created between master and man resulting therefrom, and the deplorable antipathy of workmen towards their employers. Hence I sympathize with their desire in this, but I would, as in other circumstances, make it optional for a majority in any trade to decide whether they should work eight or nine hours per day."<sup>1</sup>

*Foreign Competition.*

"In fact there is no other solution of the problem than this, and, however much it may be objected to by certain employers on the ground of lessened production, or of the

<sup>1</sup> This was decided at the 1892 Trade Union Congress.

bogie of Continental competition, I fearlessly assert there would be no diminution of the output, but rather the contrary ; while the men will be in a better physical condition, and thus be enabled to do practically more work, as I find in our own experiment. It is pitiful to me to hear employers talking in words of dread and fear of 'foreign' competition. Why, the longer hours the men work on the Continent the better it is for us, as they are in a worse physical condition to turn the work out. If long hours meant increased production, why are they not sending coals to Newcastle ? why are they not cutting us out in shipbuilding ? why are they not sending their pig-iron here ? why are they not sending their engines over here ? So long as conscription is in force and long hours are worked in any country, the British workman and the British capitalist need have no fear of holding their own with the greatest of ease."

#### *International Eight Hours.*

Granted, suggested our correspondent, that English industries could successfully compete under the conditions you have dealt with, what would be the effect under an international eight hours system ? "Under those circumstances," said Mr. Allan, "we are again brought face to face with the fact that Britons, by reason of their insular position, their hardy nature, their muscular development, and what I would call their strength of race, will always excel any other nation in the commercial battle. No nation will hold its own, even on equal conditions of labour, with British workmen. Somehow they are born with either a hammer or a plough-shank in their hands, and, being largely sustained on beef and beer, their muscular

development is such that it is bad to beat. There is no effeminacy in the British workman. Treat him well, feed him well, house him well, and he will lick creation."

*Eight Hours best for the Employer.*

Asked as to whether he did not think the success of the Sunderland experiment might be used by the opponents of an eight hours bill as an argument in favour of the feasibility of securing the concession by what is known as trade union effort, Mr. Allan replied: "No doubt the success which has attended our experiment—which I don't consider an experiment now—ought to convince all employers that such a departure from the old hours of working ought to be settled by mutual arrangement. In fact, it would be better for every employer if it were so. By entering into negotiations in a kindly and sympathetic way with the leaders of the workmen for the commencement of the new era of labour, they would go far to show that they were willing to meet their workmen in a fair and generous spirit, while *per contra*, the spirit of antagonism to all the men's aspirations at present engenders dissatisfaction in the men's minds, discontent in their hearts, and less regard for their employers' interests. An eight hours day, if wrung from or forced upon the employers, will assuredly produce no grateful effect in the minds of the workmen, whereas if given to them in the spirit just mentioned, it would go far to bridge the chasm at present existing between employers and employed. Somehow a combination of employers seems to act upon the principle of opposing everything proposed by the workmen, this opposition arising in many instances from political bias and dread of the growth of

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democratic principles. Such a feeling is to be deplored, as no demand of the workmen can receive due justice, or be looked at in a broad and comprehensive light while such feelings obscure and warp the better judgment of the employers."

### *Why Factories don't Pay.*

It is well known that Mr. Allan's sympathy with his men, and the manner in which he has conducted the works, has produced a fine *esprit de corps* among the men. The genial employer discoursed on this topic with rare enthusiasm. He regrets deeply the lack of such feeling in most modern industrial concerns. "A great change," he said, "has come over the spirit of workmen during the last ten years. I observe more and more every day the effect produced on the men's minds by the example set to them by their employers. In my young days the employer mingled with, spoke to, and knew every man under him, and a feeling of love and respect was thereby induced in the workmen's minds. The system of to-day somehow seems to be the very opposite. It is no unusual thing to see managers of factories walking or driving in cabs to their works about ten o'clock in the day with their blue coats with velvet collars, a bouquet of flowers in their breasts, and a cigar stuck in their mouths. They are too big and too indifferent not only to their own interests but the interests of the concern they represent, to turn out to their work as they should do, and set an example to the men. When workmen note—and they do note—such indifference on the part of their employers, it is not to be wondered at that they take little interest in their work. If the officers of a regiment were to lie in bed and leave the parade or morning duty to be done by

the sergeants and corporals, that regiment would soon be demoralized. So it is in these practical, utilitarian, and fierce competition times with factories. It is a matter of no surprise to me why some of the factories in this district which once paid good dividends are paying none now. The bad example set to the workmen is productive of incalculable loss to any firm ; the absence of enthusiasm on the part of employers and their managers tends to produce profitless balance-sheets. The old times must again be restored, the old kindly feelings and the word of encouragement to man and boy must again be given, the presence of the manager and employer must again be seen when the toiler commences his daily duty, else capitalists or employers of labour need not complain or blame the men if their factories are unsuccessful."

*The Manager's Testimony.*

Mr. Harrison, the manager of the works, gave some useful, practical information as to the success of the eight hours system. A certain quantity of work, he said, used to be turned out by each machine in a day's work under the nine hours system. Incredible as it may seem to some, he states that the same amount of work is turned out by the same machine while worked for eight hours only. He has only one explanation for this new state of things, namely, that much time that was formerly wasted is now utilized, and that the men go into their work with much greater enthusiasm. It is a very easy thing, he states, for men to do an additional hour's work in a day, for the men stick to their work instead of wasting five minutes here and there as formerly.

*The Men's Point of View.*

Our correspondent was afterwards taken into the shops, and there had an opportunity of making personal inquiries among several representative men as to how they regarded the change. Their feeling was unanimously in its favour. Messrs. Adams and Carse, two of the workmen, said the system worked splendidly. They never lost any time now, they said, whereas Mr. Carse vouched for the fact that before the initiation of the system he had known as many quarters lost by the men in two days as would constitute three weeks' work. Both of the men expressed surprise that the employers generally did not adopt the system, and gave it as their deliberate opinion that the masters could not lose anything by making such a change, but that they would gain thereby. Mr. Stitt, a boiler-maker, said there was not a man in the shop who would like to go back to the early morning. He now came to his work with a full stomach, instead of an empty one, and had felt a most beneficial change in his health. Mr. Cameron, one of the apprentices, was equally eulogistic of the new arrangement, which suited the lads sp'endidly. One of the greatest benefits to be derived from the new system was, to him, the opportunity afforded of attending evening classes without the necessity of curtailing his sleep in order to be at work at six in the morning.

Whether from the point of view of the employer or the men there can be no doubt that the eight hours experiment —now doubtless a permanent system—has been a remarkable success at the Scotia Engine Works.

## APPENDIX II.

### THE EIGHT HOURS QUESTION IN THE UNITED STATES.

A SHORT but interesting communication by Mr. R. Donald, in the *Economic Journal* for September, 1892, informs us that "spasmodic efforts to create an eight hours agitation in the United States" have been made ever since 1866, but not much has been done, except by the Carpenters' Trades Union. American workmen depend more on their own Unions than on legislative action, and there is less demand for legislative interference there than in England, the reason being that they know that laws on the subject might be passed, but would never be enforced. "There are now eight-hour laws in thirteen States, and *not one of them is enforced or attempted to be enforced.*" Hence there is very little demand for an eight hours day. An investigation among trades unions, however, made by Charles F. Peck, the Labour Commissioner for New York State (referring only to that State), shows that this State, with a population of six millions and a half, and with the best organized trades unions of any State in the U. S. A., also shows the highest wages and shortest hours. Since the shortening of hours in 1890 wages have not fallen, and are

the same for a forty-eight hours week for carpenters as previously for a fifty-eight hours week in 1880 (viz. 14s. a day). Stonemasons got 8s. for ten hours in 1880, and 12s. for nine hours in 1890 ; plasterers 16s. for ten hours in 1883, and 18s. for nine hours in 1889. To the question "did the reduction in the number of hours result in an increase of the working power?" the invariable answer was that the increase was about one-tenth. Finally, "all the evidence in this report goes to prove that when labour organizations have succeeded in reducing hours, they have in most cases also succeeded in raising wages."

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